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LESSONS

FROM

THE GREAT BIOGRAPHY.

BY

JAMES HAMILTON, D.D., F.L.S.,

AUTHOR OF "LIFE IN EARNEST," "MOUNT OF OLIVES," "HAPPY HOME,"
"ROYAL PREACHER," ETC.

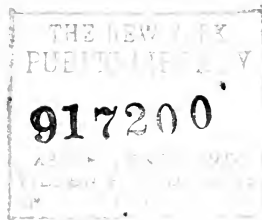
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PREFACE.

AT one time it was the purpose of the writer to connect together the leading incidents recorded by the four Evangelists, translating them, as it were, into modern language, and supplying a few of those historical and topographical details for which we are indebted to recent research. If executed with reverence and judgment, the author believes that such *Memoirs of the Saviour's Ministry* would be to many a welcome and useful work. For the present, however, he is deterred from an attempt which, like every labour of love, craves a large amount of leisure. But having given to his own congregation a few specimens of the Gospel Story thus rendered, he now ventures to publish them, retaining the practical

reflections with which they were accompanied, and in the hope that such friends as are kind enough to look into the volume will excuse its fragmentary character, its important omissions, and its occasional disregard of chronological sequence.

LONDON, May 1, 1857.

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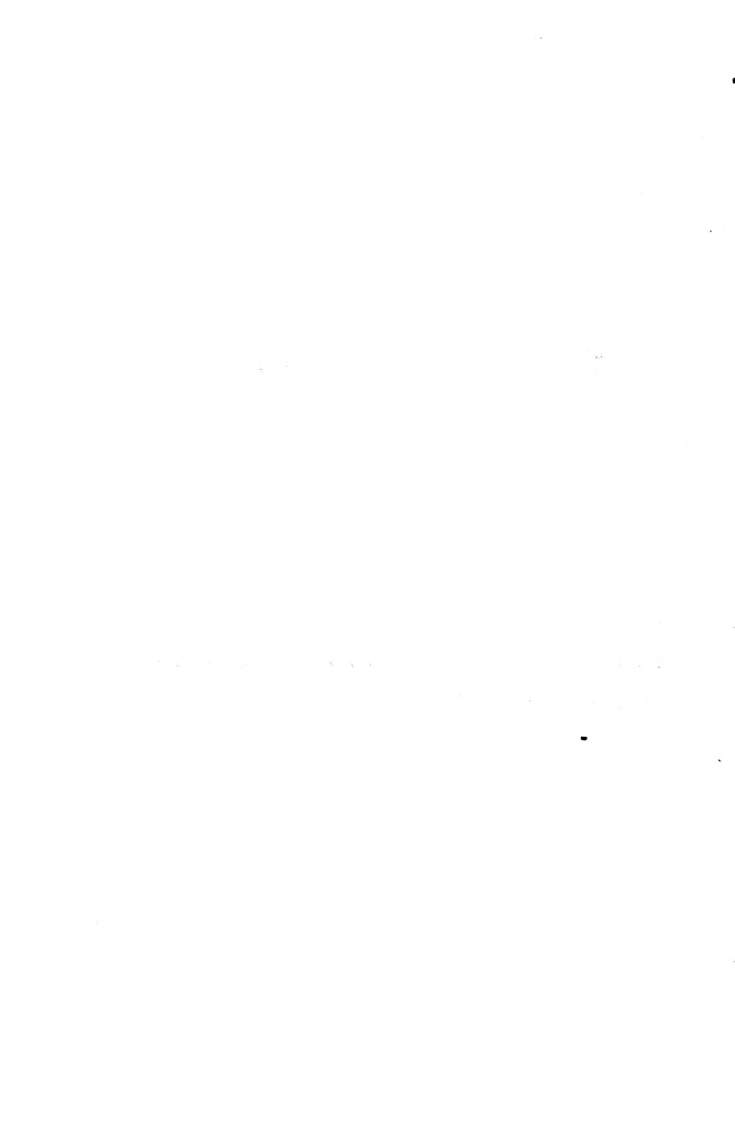
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Early Incidents.

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- V. THE WILDERNESS.



Pre-existence.

IN ordinary biographies, a birth is the beginning. It was in the year 1483 that the mind to which we owe the Reformation commenced its existence ; for it was then that Martin Luther was born. It was in London that the career began to which England is indebted for its great epic poem, and that other from which science received its mightiest modern impulse ; for it was there that Milton and Bacon first saw the light of life. Having told us this, the biographer feels that he has begun at the beginning ; and with this statement coincides the consciousness of the individual himself. For, whatever the old philosophy may have dreamed about the pre-existence of spirit and the transmigration of souls, no man could ever seriously say that he had led another life before he was born. No man could ever tell incidents and experiences which had occurred to him in a state of existence anterior to the present. With us, to all intents, our birth is our beginning.

In the whole history of our species there has been

only one exception. That exception occurred in the Holy Land eighteen hundred years ago. There was a Prophet in Galilee remarkable for the profusion and splendour of His miracles, and yet more remarkable for the beautiful innocence and majestic elevation of His entire career; and among the other peculiarities of a character unique and outstanding this was one: He was constantly and familiarly speaking of a life which He had led elsewhere; and though He had been born at Bethlehem in the reign of Augustus, it was evident that He never regarded that birth as *His* beginning. Speaking always of God as His father, on the eve of His expected martyrdom He concluded a solemn address to His chosen friends in these unusual words—"The Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God. I came from the Father and am come into the world: again, I leave the world and go to the Father." And so far back did that existence extend which He had spent elsewhere, that His words once leading the Jews to think that He claimed an age anterior to ancient Abraham, He not only allowed it, but in words of deep significance answered, "Before Abraham was, I AM." Nay, so remote was that anterior existence of His, that He speaks of it as older than creation itself; and in the freest and most unreserved forth-pouring of His soul which the record has preserved—in that

prayer which wound up the work given Him to do, and amidst whose closing accents He passed to the final conflict—in the explicitness of a high conjuncture, and in the fervour of filial confidence, His language is all a-glow with recollections of that blissful association with His Divine Father which He had enjoyed in the depths of a dateless eternity. “And now, O Father, glorify thou me, with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was. Unto the men whom thou gavest me I have given the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me.” “Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.”

In harmony with which consciousness of His own is the style of His inspired biographers. True, they relate His birth; but with them His birth is not His beginning. It is His arrival from another sphere; it is His inauguration in human nature. It is an advent, an incarnation; it is not a new being called forth from the regions of nonentity. It is our world receiving a pre-existent visitor; it is our humanity enshrining a celestial occupant; and when they chronicle the fact, Evangelists use language which at once lifts our eyes from the cradle, and sends our

imaginations backwards far beyond the reign of the Cæsars. In the prophetic description of His birth-place, Matthew quotes the words of Micah, of which the full context is, "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." And he does not scruple to apply to the infant born there the words of Isaiah, "Behold, a virgin shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel; which being interpreted, is, God with us." And in his allusion to the same great incident, John tells us, "IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE WORD, AND THE WORD WAS GOD; AND THE WORD WAS MADE FLESH."

As we purpose to review some of the incidents in the earthly life of Jesus Christ, it is right at the outset to avow our belief that His life on earth was a mere incident in an existence which had no beginning. We deeply feel that "great is the mystery of godliness;" at the same time we feel that revelation leaves us no alternative. If we accept the New Testament as a truthful record, we must receive the Lord Jesus as "God manifest in the flesh." The proofs of this lie scattered over all the Scriptures, and they have frequently been collected and arranged with admirable distinctness and irresistible cogency. At present, we

must be content to indicate a few of those considerations which, we apprehend, will be deemed by candid minds conclusive.

1. And our first appeal is to Christ's own language. There are some subjects to which He seldom adverted, apparently reserving it for another teacher to unfold them. For example, He seldom spoke of His *office*. Scarcely ever do we find Him in words express avowing His Messiahship; and it is only now and then, when the avowal was to answer some important purpose, or when to withhold it would have been disingenuous and misleading, that "He confessed and denied not," "I am the Christ." For instance, when the inquirer at Jacob's Well, impressed with His prophetic insight, and just as they were about to be interrupted by the return of the disciples from the village,—when she said, "When Messiah cometh, he will tell us all things," at such a moment, and after such a hint, to remain silent would have been to leave a soul in darkness; and so Jesus answered, "I that speak unto thee am he." In the same way, when Peter made his memorable acknowledgment—"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God;" and when the high priest, in his judicial capacity, demanded, "I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God," to have kept silence would have been to perplex His disciples and bewilder the world; and

accordingly He gave an answer which left no doubt as to His Messianic character.

And yet, although seldom in words express claiming to be the Christ, He was constantly assuming it. Most of the miracles He wrought pointed this way, and were ever and anon suggesting to spectators the question, "When Messiah cometh, will he do more miracles than this man doeth?" and of His public sermons, as well as of His confidential addresses to His disciples, the drift was all in this direction—issuing invitations to the one, and giving instructions as to their future work to the other, which, in the case of any besides the promised Saviour, would have been irrelevant and meaningless. And as in regard to His office, so in regard to His *person*. As He seldom proclaimed His errand, so He did not often enunciate His intrinsic greatness: but as He was content to fulfil His mission, so He allowed His glory to reveal itself; and it was only when the interests of truth and goodness called for the confession, that the language of tacit assumption was exchanged for an articulate and audible avowal. But just as before the hostile high priest He confessed His office, so before the hostile populace He once and again confessed His celestial origin, "I and the Father are one;" "Before Abraham was, I am;" and the Jews, who well understood the language, took up stones to stone Him as a blasphemer; "because he who

was a man made himself equal with God." And just as to Peter in the presence of the twelve, He admitted His Messiahship, so to Philip in the presence of the rest He said, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father. Believest thou not that I am in the Father and the Father in me?" And just as to confirm the faith of the Samaritan inquirer, He said, "I that speak unto thee am Messiah," so when to the faltering Thomas He gave the overwhelming token which transformed his incredulity into adoration, to his exclamation, "My Lord, and my God!" Jesus answered, "Thomas, because thou hast seen thou hast believed," and accepted the God-confessing epithet. When we advert to the entire character of Jesus—when we remember how He "emptied himself and became of no reputation"—when we remember that it was His way not so much to lift up His voice as to let His light shine, so that His deeds rather than His words bewrayed His intrinsic majesty—when we remember how truthful and ingenuous, and how jealous of God's glory He ever was, these repeated avowals acquire a vastly greater significance; and taken in unison with the entire style of the Saviour's deportment, which was nothing less than a continuous response to the voice from the excellent glory, "This is my beloved Son," we are shut up to the conclusion that in His own consciousness Jesus was God.

The opposite assumption, if fatal to the Saviour's

divinity, would also appear fatal to His simplicity and godly sincerity. It would imply that in a season the most solemn of all His history, when a disciple prayed his departing Master, "Shew us the Father," instead of answering the prayer and shewing what was truly equivalent to the Father, He had appeased the anxiety of Philip with a play of words or a paradox. It would imply that "the Light of the world"—the reformer who was so possessed with the zeal of God's house that He drove all intruders from the temple courts—was so little averse to usurp the Divine prerogative, that when again and again the Jews understood Him as asserting His equality with God, rather than undeceive them He allowed them to take up stones to stone Him. It would imply that He who quoted to the tempter that Scripture, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve," in accepting Himself the worship of Peter and Thomas and others, was after all less scrupulous than the angel who started back from John's adoration, "See thou do it not; for I also am of thy fellow-servants the prophets: WORSHIP GOD."

2. The consciousness of the Saviour is amply borne out by the language of the sacred writers. "God hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son—the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person." "Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, believed on in the

world, received up into glory.” “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.” “For in him (Christ) dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.” “Whose are the fathers, and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.”* Expressions like these, direct and indirect, constantly occurring, shew that to the habitual thoughts of primitive discipleship, the Saviour was nothing less than Divine. Nor is it only in didactic discourse that such assertions are continually repeated, but the whole apostolic history goes on the assumption of the Saviour’s omnipotence and omnipresence; and it is impossible to read the Book of Acts without perceiving that every disciple of that early age was in daily life, as well as in extreme conjunctures, expecting the fulfilment of his Master’s promise—a promise which only a Divine Person could fulfil—“Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.”

3. There are Scripture proofs of another class which we think carry with them a peculiar charm and conclusiveness: we mean those passages in the Old Testament which are undoubtedly applied to the

* Heb. i. 1, 2; 1 Tim. iii. 16; Phil. ii. 5-7; Col. ii. 9; Rom. ix. 5.

Most High, but which in the New Testament are as distinctly transferred to Jesus Christ. In the forty-fifth Psalm we read, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre." But in the first chapter of Hebrews we are told that these words are spoken by the Father to the Son. In the sixth chapter of Isaiah we have a magnificent description of God's glory, — Jehovah sitting on "a throne high and lifted up," and "his train filling the temple," whilst seraphs veil their faces with their wings, and make the temple vibrate with their hymns of rapture. But in the gospel of John we are told that the spectacle which was on this occasion vouchsafed to Isaiah was a vision of Christ's glory.

Amongst geographers there have sometimes been disputes as to the identity of a river. They have debated, for instance, whether the Quorra were the same as the Niger; but when a boat launched on the Niger, after a few weeks made its appearance floating on the Quorra, there was an end of the argument: the names might be two, but the streams were demonstrably the one the continuation of the other. And sometimes a critic, indignant at an anonymous author, has shewn how much better a well-known writer would have handled the self-same subject—when it turns out that the nameless and the well-known personages are in this instance identical. In

the hundred and second Psalm, eternity and unchangeableness are ascribed to the Great Creator; and there is no opponent of the Saviour's divinity who would not sing that psalm as a fitting ascription to the Most High God: when, behold! the Epistle to the Hebrews informs us that it is a hymn of praise to Jesus Christ! To hail any creature, and say, "Holy, holy, Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of thy glory," we shall be told, by those who view Christ as a creature, is blasphemy. And yet when we push our inquiry up the stream of time, and go back to the period to which John the Evangelist sends us—seven centuries before the advent—we find this identical anthem sung to Jesus Christ by no meaner worshippers than the heavenly seraphim!*

Perhaps there is no doctrine on which the oracle has pronounced so plainly and so positively; and when to the direct and absolute deliverance of Scripture, you add all its incidental confirmations, the proof becomes not only irresistible, but almost redundant and oppressive. For instance, if Jesus be not a partaker of the Divine nature, how strange and unaccountable the solemnity which encircles His person whenever He is introduced in the Word of God! "How comes it to be such a crime to trample on His blood; and why is the man who loves Him not 'an

* Compare Ps. xlv. 6 with Heb. i. 8; Ps. cii. 25-27 with Heb. i. 10-14; Isa. vi. 1-4, 9, with John xii. 39-41.

anathema?' Wherefore is it represented as such a stretch of Divine munificence, that God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, if that Son were a mere man or a mere archangel? And when Howard and other men have impoverished themselves for their fellow-men, why should it be deemed such peerless generosity, 'Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, for your sakes he became poor; that ye, through his poverty, might be rich?' And if the mind of the Saviour were finite, how should it need a special prayer 'that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend, with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge?'"* If Christ were a creature, how could He promise to numerous disciples, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world?" And how should He associate His name with the Name supreme in such a symbol as the baptismal dedication, "Go and make disciples, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost?"

Is there an attribute or an act of the Most High which is not ascribed to Jesus Christ? For example, does Jehovah claim eternal existence as His prerogative? "Thus saith Jehovah, I am the first, and I

* Wardlaw on the Socinian Controversy, pp. 46-48.

am the last, and besides me there is no God." But in the Apocalypse Jesus says again and again, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last." Does Jehovah claim as a Divine distinction an all-pervading and all-perceiving presence? Does He promise to the Church of old Israel, "In all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee?" And does He say, "The heart is deceitful above all things; who can know it? I Jehovah search the hearts; I try the reins?" But has not Jesus promised to the Christian Church, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them;" "Then shall all the churches know that I (Jesus) am he that searcheth the reins and the hearts?" Is creation the work of Omnipotence, and must "the gods who have not made the heavens perish from the earth?" But "all things were made by the Word, and without him was not anything made that was made." "By him," that is, by God's "dear Son," "were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist."

So thoroughly intermingled with the whole texture of New Testament Scripture is the Godhead of the

Saviour, that no criticism which does not destroy the book can altogether extinguish its testimony. We have seen a copy of the Gospels and Epistles which was warranted free from all trace of the Trinity, but it was not the Testament of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. We beheld it, and we received instruction. It did not want beauty; for the Parables, and the Sermon on the Mount, and many a touching passage, still were there. But neither would a garden want beauty if the grass plats and green bushes still remained, though you had carefully culled out every blossoming flower. The humanity of Jesus still is beautiful, even when the Godhead is forgotten or denied. Or rather it looked like a coronation tapestry, with all the golden threads torn out; or an exquisite mosaic from which some unscrupulous finger had abstracted the gems and only left the common stones: you not only missed the glory of the whole, but in the fractures of the piece and the coarse plaster with which the gaps were supplied, you saw how rude was the process by which its jewels had been wrenched away. It was a casket without the pearl. It was a shrine without the Shekinah. And yet, after all, it was not sufficiently expurgated; for, after reading it, the thought would recur, How much easier to fabricate a Gnostic Testament exempt from all trace of our Lord's humanity, than a Unitarian Testament ignoring His divinity!

Nor is the subject we have now been handling a barren speculation—a mere dogma in divinity. It lies at the very foundation of the sinner's hopes—it is full of strong consolation to those whose awakened consciences crave a mighty Redeemer. The demerit of sin is enormous. Considering the Majesty which sin insults and the law which sin violates, it is scarcely possible to exaggerate its turpitude, and it is impossible to see how a creature can exhaust its penalty. But Jesus is divine. The Surety is all-sufficient. The victim is God's own Son. "Christ with his own blood hath entered into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." When we remember that God's servant was in this case God's Son, we can understand how by His obedience "God's righteous servant shall justify many." And when we recollect that He who poured forth His soul an offering for sin was the Creator of the ends of the earth, who fainteth not, neither is weary—when we remember that to all the sufferings of the Surety this value was given that they were the sufferings of innocence, this virtue was given that they were the sufferings of one who thought it no robbery to be equal with God—when we remember that on the cross of Calvary it was "God who

did sacrifice to God," we can see at once how precious is the blood then shed, and how it cleanseth from all sin. No wonder that in Him was life, and the life was the light of men. For His people Immanuel has gained the privilege of being their second Adam—their new and nobler head—restoring that life which their first father forfeited; and the safest existence in the universe is the life which is "hid with Christ in God."

Which leads us to remark, in conclusion, How secure are the friends of the Saviour! Our souls are lost, and were they this night saved and given back into our own keeping, we should soon lose them again. And were the best and holiest man we ever knew standing surety for their salvation, we should still have cause to tremble; for after the case of David and Peter, we see what dire disasters may befall the fairest and stateliest goodness of this world. Nay, were an angel from heaven undertaking to keep these souls, we might still have cause to hesitate; for there have been even angels who kept not their first estate, and how shall the kindest angel answer for my sin? But, reader, He who asks the keeping of your soul is Jesus, the Son of God—that Saviour who has at His command infinite merit to atone for its sin, and the might of omnipotence to guard it from danger—that Saviour who is one with the Father, and who can say, "To my sheep I give eternal life; neither can any

pluck them out of my Father's hand." Ah, brother, an immortal soul is a pearl of great price, and that soul alone is safe whose Redeemer is mighty. But were it possible to take your soul in your hand, and transfer it as completely away to Him as you might open a casket and give away the gem, so that for years and ages you should see it no more, it were a wise and safe consignment. But how is it that Jesus does? The soul thus surrendered He takes, and puts His own royal mark upon it, and, though left in the casket of clay for a time, it is as safe as any jewel in His crown. But He does not forget it. He confides it to the care of that Heavenly Artist who polishes its rough surfaces and grinds away its disfiguring flaws; and by the pains taken with it—by the old things passing away and the new things appearing—the believer knows that Jesus has accepted this deposit, and will claim it in the day when He makes up His jewels. And when guilt upbraids him, or Satan sifts him, or the King of Terrors puts all his courage to the test, that joyful believer can exclaim, "I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."

Appearances Before the Advent.

MOST of the time which Abraham spent in the Land of Promise, he sojourned at Mamre. With its airy uplands—its hill-sides sprinkled with olives, vines, and cherry-trees—its turf dappled with daisies and the star-of-Bethlehem—it was a charming retreat; and what made it still more delightful was a thicket of evergreen trees, under which he had formed his encampment. Here, in the heat of the day, Abraham would often sit at the entrance of his patriarchal pavilion; and as the bees murmured in the dark foliage overhead, and soft winds passed into the tent, it was pleasant to look through half-shut lids and espy the herdmen and their flocks huddled together in the shadow of the distant copse; and amidst the sunshine, with its sleepy oppression, it was pleasant to close these lids and muse on the wonderful past till slumber succeeded, and life's morning in Ur, the appearance of the God of glory, and the more wonderful future, floated and flickered through the noon-day vision.

On one such occasion the patriarch received a remarkable visit. He observed three men approaching, and, with the impulse of the olden hospitality, he hasted forth to meet them. As soon as he was near enough, in one of them he perceived something so pre-eminent and prince-like,—we could almost fancy something which so brought to mind the days of Ur and “the God of glory,”—that with a lowly prostration he exclaimed, “My Lord, if now I have found favour in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant;” and then, extending his welcome to all the three, he added, “Let a little water, I pray you, be fetched, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree; and I will fetch a morsel of bread, and comfort ye your hearts.” They accepted the invitation. They sat down in the leafy shade; and when Sarah’s cakes, and the calf from the herd, with milk and butter, were placed on the board, they partook of the friendly cheer; and when they had ended their repast, and when the principal guest had rewarded the kindness of his host by announcing that the time at length was come, and that the son of promise should now be born, Sarah’s incredulous laughter was rebuked by the significant challenge, “Is anything too hard for Jehovah?”

But if any doubt as to the heavenly character of the speaker remained, that doubt was speedily dispelled. When the meal was ended and the day was

growing cool, the travellers resumed their journey. They set their faces eastward, and Abraham accompanied them. They soon reached an eminence from which they beheld a glorious prospect. Embosomed amongst the mountains stretched a little paradise. Fringed with palms, luxuriant with tropic verdure, and reflecting the purple cliffs from the tranquil bends of its glistening river, it almost looked as if a fragment of old Eden had drifted down the stream and stranded among these silent hills; and as the spectator gazed on the mighty orchard, and heard the hum ascending from the smokeless villages, he might be pardoned if he envied the inhabitants of such a happy valley. But Abraham's companions looked grave, and as the two subordinates went down the steep, Abraham and the other were left alone. That other now stood forth in Deity confessed. He told Abraham that this lovely scene was about to become the theatre of a fearful visitation. 'The place is fair, but the people are vile. Their sin is very grievous. As here we stand, there comes up the lowing of the herds, the carol of the evening bird; but that which reaches the ear of God is the cry of abominable iniquities—the loose jest, the ribald song, the voice of lust and violence. And although the landscape is beautiful, on account of its horrible inhabitants Heaven cannot look at it. It is time to pour over it the flaming annihilation, and blot it out of being.'

And Abraham's face grew pale. The doomed region contained those whom he dearly loved; and, falling at the feet of the celestial speaker, he exclaimed, "Oh, let not the Lord be angry," and with an affable and yielding arbiter he urged his suit till he hoped that he had won a reprieve for the guilty cities. Then "THE LORD went his way as soon as he had left communing with Abraham."

No one can doubt that the patriarch's Visitor was a Divine Person; and any one who considers the entire facts of the case and the fitness of things, can have as little doubt that this Divine Person was He who afterwards said of Himself, "Before Abraham was, I am," and who enunciated the great truth, "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." He it was who said, "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" and it was He who, when the two angels passed on and entered Sodom, remained alone with the patriarch, and confided to him the secret of the coming overthrow. It was He who, so exorable and so ready to pardon, gave in six times over to His servant's intercession, and said, "For the sake of ten righteous, I will not destroy it;" and who, when a fearful necessity inverted the vials of vengeance, "remembered Abraham," and rescued the kindred of His friend.

A century and a half passed on—a century and a half

of those ample and deliberate days, when incidents were few and impressions lasted long. Abraham slept by Sarah's side in the cave of Machpelah, but God was mindful of His covenant, and in the sunny world outside the sepulchre He was making that covenant to grow. Isaac's son and Abraham's grandson was returning from a foreign sojourn, and was bringing with him eleven sons of his own, and a mighty retinue. And he was nearing the Promised Land, but still on the further side of Jordan. Word had reached him that an angry brother was on the way to meet him with an overwhelming company; and, after making the best arrangements to propitiate Esau, he was now left alone in darkness and in solitude. To-morrow would decide his destiny, and whilst others slumbered in the tents, Jacob, anxious and wakeful, wandered down to the sides of Jabbok, and cried in his extremity to the God of Bethel. But instead of heaven opening, instead of some friendly sign from the excellent glory, the patriarch found himself suddenly assaulted. It might be Esau himself, or it might be some supernatural opponent; but it seemed as if a man were wrestling with him, bearing him backward, twisting, thrusting, and straining, and striving to hurl him to the ground. It was a strange, mysterious conflict, with no spectators except the stars, and in a silence only broken by the babbling of the brook; yet, silent and insuperable as he was, Jacob began to

feel that his opponent was not an enemy. He was not an enemy, and yet he withstood the pilgrim's prayer; and though Jacob "wept and made supplication," as well as struggled in his earnest agony, he could not extort his request, till the day-spring closed the strife, and with a touch that left him lame for life, and with a blessing that made him illustrious to all eternity, the angel vanished. "And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel; for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved." Jacob gave the place a new name, and God gave a new name to the patriarch. "Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel; for as a prince hast thou power with God and with man, and hast prevailed." The supplanter had come out in a new character, and earned a new title. By this valiant constancy as man with man, he had evinced himself a hero and a king of men; by this fervid importunity as a creature with his Creator, he had come out a prince of believers, a favourite with Heaven, the conqueror of condescending Omnipotence, a pattern of perseverance in prayer.

Two centuries and a half passed on—four hundred years since the flames of Sodom were quenched in the Dead Sea, and its ashes buried in that sullen sepulchre. The descendants of Abraham and Israel were now bondsmen in Egypt; and in the grim solitudes of Sinai, one of the proscribed race, a man who

had been reared in a palace, but who was now reduced to do the work of a herdsman, was watching the flock, but was revolving higher themes, when he was suddenly startled by a strange phenomenon. A blaze of light drew his eyes in the direction of a certain shrub or tree, which for a moment he might have fancied had caught fire ; but although with its brilliant pyramid it outshone the noon, he quickly noticed that it was not really burning. It was transfigured, and its leaves and branches shone as through a tent of flame ; but instead of curling and crackling in the heat, it continued unconsumed, and from its excellent glory a voice hailed the astonished exile : “ Draw not nigh, but put off thy shoes from off thy feet ; for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.” Had this been all, Moses might have imagined that “ the angel of the Lord ” who appeared to him in the bush, and whose voice he now heard, was a mere ministering spirit, one of the many members of the heavenly host ; but the speaker, “ angel ” as he was, went on to add, “ I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” Then Moses hid his face, and from between the leafy cherubim and from within the flaming canopy the voice proceeded : “ I have surely seen the affliction of my people in Egypt, and I have heard their cry : and I am come down to deliver them, and to bring them unto a good land and a large, a land flowing with milk

and honey. Come now, therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt." And when the timid Hebrew trembled at the task, when he shrank from the prospect of appearing before Pharaoh, in order to disarm his fears the speaker added, "Certainly I will be with thee." Accordingly, from the New Testament we gather that the Son of God, the Saviour, accompanied that exodus; that it was His voice which shook Mount Sinai; that it was He whom the murmurers tempted at Massah, when so many were destroyed of serpents; and that He was the spiritual rock of whom the believers among them drank as oft as they resorted to their Divine conductor and unfailing companion.*

The significance of these passages is considerably impaired, owing to a certain vagueness which attends the use of the word "angel." That word we are apt to associate with celestial beings, higher than ourselves, but inferior to the Creator. And doubtless the whole heavenly host are angels; but there is nothing to prevent a Divine Person, or a human person either, from acting as an angel. An "angel" means a "messenger" or "missionary," an "envoy," "one who is sent;" and just as early evangelists were angels or messengers of the Church, so the Son of God was

* Heb. xii. 26; 1 Cor. x. 9, 4. The evidence on this subject is arranged with consummate ability and clearness in Principal Hill's "Lectures in Divinity," book iii.

the messenger or angel of the Father. And the only way to educe a consistent meaning from the passages now quoted, is to merge for a moment the ambiguous intermediate word, the "angel," and fix our regards on the two extremes—the "Man" and "the Mighty God"—in one word, Messiah, the Divine Missionary, the Messenger of the Covenant, God manifest in flesh, the Angel-Jehovah.

With this clue how readily all the dispensations run into one another, and how real is the identity of all believers! Yes, the Divine Friend, with whom Enoch walked, is the same as He who on the road to Emmaus made the heart of Cleopas and his comrade burn within them; and that Alpha and Omega of all his affections who well-nigh detached from the imprisoning rock and the encumbering clay the exile of Patmos, is the same Jesus who by another name talked with our sinless progenitors in the fragrant bowers of Paradise. He who said to Moses going up to a fierce tyrant, "Certainly I will be with thee," is the same Saviour, so sympathetic and so mighty, who said to apostles going out into a frowning world, "And lo! I am with you alway!" and He whom the eastern monarch saw walking in the midst of the burning pile with the three unscathed martyrs, is the same "Son of Man" whom through the opened heaven Stephen saw at the right hand of God, and to whom, with latest breath, he cried, "Lord Jesus,

receive my spirit." Nay, that Almighty Friend who was the sole companion of the Hebrew Law-giver's dying hour, and who took all the charge of Moses' funeral, is the same who said of Himself, "I am the Resurrection and the Life," and whose own lifeless form at last was laid in Joseph's sepulchre.

And do we err when we fancy a resemblance between these earlier visits and certain incidents which happened after the eventual Incarnation? Is there nothing in the burning bush which transports our thoughts to Tabor? and in the awful attraction which made Moses "draw near," and the overwhelming glory which next instant bore him to the dust, was there nothing akin to that consciousness of encircling heaven which made the spectators at once bury their faces and yet cry from the midst of their amazement, "Master, it is good to be here?" At the ford of Jabbok is there nothing which sends us away to the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, and, as a twin-picture to the father wrestling for all his family, exhibits a poor, weak woman importuning for her only child, till He who said to the one, "Thy name shall be called Israel, for as a prince thou hast prevailed with God," amazed at a faith such as He had found, "no, not in Israel," at length yielded to a tenacity which silence, and rebuffs, and seeming reluctance could not shake off, exclaiming, "O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as

thou wilt?" And in that God-like form which looked down so sadly on the doomed and lovely cities of the plain, and which, for the sake of a redeeming few, would so willingly have saved, is there no resemblance to One who, two thousand years thereafter, stood upon a neighbouring height, and, looking down on another doomed but lovely city, burst into tears, and cried, "If thou hadst known in this thy day the things that belong to thy peace!—but now they are for ever hid from thine eyes."

The attire may alter, but the wearer does not change. The missionary may talk one language in England and another in India; but his mind is in either land the same. The attire, the mode of manifestation, the expressive actions, the style of language vary, as they fit into the several ages, from the primitive archaic time down to the days of the Gospel story: but throughout we can recognise ever reappearing the self-same Revealer of the Father, the self-same Prophet of the Church—that very Son of God who saved the first sinner, who saved the worst, and who seeks to save ourselves, "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." And, on the other hand, as far as the fundamental ideas are concerned, the Church of God on earth has all along been one. It has always been on the ground of an atonement, whether anticipated or accomplished, that the sinner has found pardon and acceptance. It

has always been through the Mediator—through the Manifester of the Father and the Saviour of men—that the believer has held communion with God. And in this sense,—as sinners who pled the Great Sacrifice; as believers who communed with palpable and articulate Deity, who worshipped the Angel-Jehovah, who adored God manifest in the flesh,—all alike have been Christians. Malachi was a Christian, and Zechariah, and Isaiah. The sweet singer of Israel was a Christian, and there was no truer Christian in this sense than Moses himself. The father of the faithful was a Christian, and so was Noah, and so was Enoch, and so, we would fain hope, was the father of mankind—the first Adam himself.

The Advent.

AUGUSTUS was Emperor.

From the Atlantic to the Euphrates—from where the legions were arrested by the snows of Sarmatia northward, and the sands of Libya southward, the world was a Roman farm; and with all its lovely islands and fruitful shores, the Mediterranean was a Roman lake. Mauritania and Numidia, Egypt, Palestine, Syria—the countries now known as Turkey, Germany, Spain, France, Belgium, Holland, Britain—all received their laws from the Italian capital, and all sent it their tribute. With its hundred and twenty millions of subjects, this region included the whole of the old world's intelligence, and nearly all its wealth; and though many of the conquered nations were fierce and strong, they had been effectually subdued, and were now overawed by an army of 300,000 men. With its beak of brass and its talons of steel the great eagle had grappled and overcome the human race, and the whole earth trembled when from his seven-hilled eyrie he flapped his wings of thunder.

There was nearly universal peace. By the courage and consummate generalship of Julius Cæsar, the most formidable nations had already been vanquished; and since the death of Pompey, and the conclusion of the civil war, the Empire, undivided and undisputed, was swayed by a single autocrat.

The pagan culture had culminated. The exquisite temples of Greece had begun to go to ruin, and in that land of sages there arose no new Pythagoras—no second Socrates. But the genius of Rome had scarcely passed the zenith. Seneca was born in the same year with John Baptist. Thousands still lived in whose ears the musical wisdom of Cicero lingered, and who had read, when newly published, the sublime speculations of Lucretius. It was but the other day that the sweet voice of Virgil had fallen mute, and only eight years since the tomb of Mæcenas had opened to admit the urn of Horace. Under its sumptuous ruler Rome was rapidly becoming a mountain-pile of marble palaces—baths, temples, theatres—the proudest on which sunbeams ever sparkled; and, with his enormous wealth and all-commanding absolutism, the Roman citizen was the lordliest mortal whom luxury ever pampered—the most supercilious demi-god who ever exacted the adulation of his fellows.*

* It is worthy of remark, that the victory of Arminius, which gave the first ominous check to the world's conqueror, did not take place till A.D. 9. (See Creasy's "Decisive Battles.") Of Roman wealth, some idea

Yet, amidst all this civilisation, it was a time of fearful depravity. In regions so remote as Britain and Germany it was scarcely surprising that dark superstitions should prevail, and that hecatombs of little children should be immolated by the fiends of the forest. But in Rome itself, under all the outward refinement, coarse tastes and fierce passions reigned; and the same patrician who at a false note in music would writhe with graceful agony, could preside imperturbable over the tortures of a slave or a prisoner; and to see him overnight shedding tears at one of Ovid's Epistles, you would not guess that he had all the morning been gloating on the convulsions of dying gladiators. Busts of Cato adorned the vestibule, but brutality and excess ran riot through the halls; and it was hard to say which was the most abandoned—the multitude who still adored divinities the patrons of every crime, or the scholars who laughed at superstition and perpetrated crimes worthy of a Mars or Jupiter.

This was the time which the Most High selected for the greatest event of human history. On the one hand, it was a time of tranquillity. The wars of long centuries had ceased. Men's minds were not ab-

may be formed from the fact that in one triumph Julius Cæsar brought home to the public treasury twelve and a-half millions sterling, and in four years the private fortune of Seneca the philosopher was augmented by more than two millions of our money. The reader of Horace and Juvenal will not need to be reminded of the vanity of the imperial Roman, nor of that gross flattery on which it subsisted.

sorbed in the contests of dynasties, nor agitated by the burning of their capitals and the desolation of their homes. And a lull like this was favourable for the commencement of a moral movement which concerned the whole of Adam's family. On the other hand, the world was old enough. For four thousand years the great experiment had been going on, and man had been permitted to do his best to retrieve the ruin of the Fall. It seemed, however, as if every struggle were only a deeper plunge; and betwixt the exploded nostrums of philosophy, and the corruption of the times, the world was grown weary of itself. A dry rot had got into the ancient faith, and idolatry and hero-worship tottered on their crumbling pillars. Satiety or disgust was the prevailing mood of the wealthy; revenge and despair gnawed the heart of the down-trampled millions. For tribes which had lost their nationality, and for citizens who had sold their hereditary freedom, there was no spell in the past; and amongst a people who had lost faith in one another, there remained nothing which could inspire the fervour of patriotism. It was felt that if extrication ever came, it must come from above; and even in heathen lands, hints gathered from the Hebrew Scriptures, or prophetic particles floated down on the muddy tide of pagan mythology, began to be carefully collected and exhibited in settings of the richest poetry, till the bard of Mantua sang of a virgin, and an unpre-

cedented offspring descended from high Heaven, who should efface the traces of our crimes, and free from its perpetual fears the world—in whose days the lion would be no terror to the ox, and the deadly serpent should die. Betwixt the general peace which prevailed, the hopeless wickedness, and the general wearying for a change, “the road was ready, and the path made straight.” “The fulness of time was come, and GOD SENT FORTH HIS SON.”

As the time was fulfilled, so the place was prepared. Two thousand years before, the Most High had marked off the land of Canaan, and had separated from the rest of mankind the family of Abraham, and, by a series of remarkable interpositions, had provided and preserved a cradle for the coming Incarnation. For the first two thousand years, the promise was public and promiscuous. The world’s Redeemer might be born anywhere, and might spring from any family. There was nothing to prevent His advent at Ararat or Olympus—nothing to preclude His descent from Japheth or from Ham. The only thing certain was, that He was coming, and that He was to descend from Eve the mother of us all. But five centuries after the flood a restricting process began, and by a series of limitations the promise was rendered more and more precise. First of all, God chose a certain Chaldee family, and Abraham was pronounced the chosen progenitor of Messiah. Then

a further restriction was made, and of Abraham's two sons the younger was taken. By and by the choice was still more narrowed, and of Isaac's twelve grandsons the dying Jacob predicted that in Judah's line must Shiloh come. And in this latitude the promise continued for many centuries, till to one of Judah's descendants it was revealed that amongst his posterity should be that mighty Prince, "whose name shall endure for ever, and whom all nations shall call blessed." The same exhaustive process which at last left David's family the favoured and eventful line, made Palestine, then Judah, and finally the little town of Bethlehem, the predestined and distinguished locality. So that when Malachi laid down the pen, and for the four centuries following, during which heaven opened no more, and the voice of inspiration was hushed, the decree was gone forth, and both the place and the pedigree were conclusively fixed. Not of Greek or Trojan ancestry, not in the hoary line of the Seleucidæ nor in the haughty house of Cæsar, but beyond all dispute, and all rivalry aside, in the lineage of David would Messiah appear; and neither Memphis nor Babylon, neither Athens nor Rome, no, nor even the holy city, no, not even Jerusalem, but of all places in the world, though so little among the thousands of Judah, should Bethlehem-Ephratah be the spot for ever eminent, "out of which should that Ruler appear,

whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."

Over the family and the region thus selected a special Providence watched, and the world's history supplies no parallel to the fortunes of the peculiar people who were to be Messiah's progenitors. All along and divinely predestined as the receptacle of incarnate Deity, the land was in the occupancy of gigantic idolaters when Jehovah presented it to Abraham; but if the Canaanites could have entertained any fear of the old and childless pilgrim, their fears must have vanished when they saw his great-grandsons saddle their asses and creep away down into Egypt, a hungry and poverty-stricken company. Ages passed on, and in all the promised land there were no tidings of its preposterous claimants, except that they were now the thralls of Pharaoh, and never likely to quit the brick-fields and burning kilns of On. But at last a rumour ran that the slaves had escaped; and if they ever got disentangled from the Arabian desert, they might possibly revisit their ancient seats, and renew their ancestral claim. But to the tall Anakim, to the Jebusites perched aloft on their rocky fortresses, and to the Canaanites scouring the plain in their chariots of iron, there was only a theme of derision in the approach of the motley multitude. At last, however, with its mysterious precursor—with its cloudy ensign moving before—that

multitude began to darken the eastern bank of the Jordan, and the men of Jericho could see them, phalanx by phalanx, condensing just over against their city. But deep and wild the river ran between, and the wanderers had neither boat nor pontoon: and high and strong the ramparts rose, and the wanderers had neither scaling-ladder nor battering-ram. Yet on, still on, the strangers pressed; and oh, wonderful! the river started back, and curbed its waters till the whole had passed. On, still on, the strangers strode, and round and round the rocky citadel they stalked in mystic marches, till a harsh and horrid blare had seven times sounded, and, like a mud-hovel in the jaws of an earthquake, the castle walls crashed in and poured their dusty ruin far and near. On, still on, that invading billow spread and poured—a charmed host unused to soldiership, and with scarce a sword among them; and from the frown of their guiding Pillar, and from the flash of their oracular Urim, the embattled squadrons of Philistia melted and disappeared, till from Judah’s milky pastures, all across Jezreel’s golden granary, on to the wine-purpled skirts of Lebanon and the honey-dropping cliffs of Carmel, the land swarmed with the chosen race, and fulfilled Heaven’s oath to faithful Abraham.

Nor less surprising was that Providence which hermetically sealed the favoured region, and which, segregating from all the peoples of the earth the

people of Israel, and infusing its distinctive element into the national mind, kept Hebrew nature from ever again mingling and getting merged in the common human nature. How wonderful the wisdom which, like naphtha in a fountain or like amber in the sea, ever floating, never melting, amidst every dispersion, in Egypt and in Babylon, kept the race distinct! How determinate the counsel and foreknowledge of God which fixed on the all-important portion of the Hebrew family, and, letting go as of no account ten tribes, protected and preserved the wonder-freighted Judah! How evident the mind of God in that home-instinct which, when other deported tribes settled down in inglorious quiescence—like those sea-creatures which, riven from the rock, still cling to it with their long tentacula, gave Judah feelers long enough to stretch across seventy years of exile, and which, beside the waters of Babylon, still kept him clasped to Jerusalem, and painfully quivering till once he returned; and how all-seeing that Eye, which, amidst the few thousands of rescued captives, made sure of Zerubbabel, and amidst the ransomed who returned to Zion saw safely on his way David's descendant and Mary's grandsire! And oh, how wonderful that counsel and excellent that working which brought about the fulness of the time—which deferred the advent till the world was at its worst, and the race to be redeemed was in its sorest

need—and which yet, in a general peace, secured an audience and an entrance for the forthcoming Gospel, and which in universal empire, in the great arterial roads and ubiquitous presence of the Roman conqueror, prepared for its glad tidings the swiftest transmission; which, planting Messiah's cradle on the summit of the hollowed mine, took care that He should be born before that mighty explosion burst which was to tear in shreds each Hebrew pedigree, and leave not a Jew within fifty miles of Bethlehem; and as soon as that advent was over came the blaze of the great catastrophe, dispersing the Jewish people over all the world, confusing all their families, consuming all their genealogies, and making it utterly impossible that another Son of David should be born in David's town!

The prophetic and providential preparation being thus complete, "The Word was made flesh."

"It was in the time of great Augustus' tax,
And then He comes
That pays all sums,
Even the whole price of lost humanity,
And sets us free
From the ungodly empery
Of sin, and Satan, and of death." *

With God there is no forgetfulness. With Him there is nothing formidable. With Him a thousand years are as one day.

* Jeremy Taylor.

It was exactly a thousand years since a promise had been made to David, that a son of his should possess universal sovereignty. "He shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. All kings shall fall down before him; all nations shall serve him, and shall call him blessed. In his days shall the righteous flourish, and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth." And it looked almost possible that this promise might be fulfilled in the sumptuous Solomon. His dominions were vast, his reign was pacific; and whilst with the omnipotence of wealth he had piled up on the heights of Zion whole quarries of marble and forests of cedar, he had filled the world with the fame of his wisdom.

But neither Solomon nor Solomon's son fulfilled the prophecy; and ever since that day the Hebrew monarchy had been dwindling more and more, till now the sceptre of Judah had grown a truncheon, short and shabby, and was wielded by a usurper's foul and servile hand.

Meanwhile, the descendants of David—where were they? You see this grassy dingle, rimmed round with its fifteen hills, and a village on the slope of one of them—a beautiful spot, abounding in birds and flowers, corn-fields and gardens, and with a fine fresh air often stirring the oaks and the mulberries, and sweeping a powdery cloud up the dusty streets

That village is Nazareth—a charming seclusion, but its inhabitants are not a gainly people. They are coarse, lawless, uncivil, and with their broad patois and sulky independence, they are no favourites with their neighbours. But among them is at least one good man, a widower of the name of Joseph. All through the week he labours diligently in that shed of his, with James and his other sons around him, making ploughs for the farmers, bowls and kneading-troughs for the matrons, spears and arrows for the hunters. But on the afternoon of the sixth day the finished implements are sent home, and the scene of industry is swept and garnished. The saw and the hammer are hung from the rafters, and, fragrant with cedar-dust and chips of pine, the shop is left to silence and solitude, whilst, released from his toils, the weary artizan enters his cottage to light the Sabbath-lamp, and then ascends the brow of the hill where stands the synagogue. To that same synagogue repairs the carpenter's youthful kinswoman and affianced bride. Meek, single-hearted, devout, she listens reverently whilst the Law and the Prophets are read, and as the songs of Zion are chanted to David's own tunes, her soul ascends on the wings of psalmody. That lily among thorns, that maid of Nazareth, and that toil-worn craftsman, Joseph the carpenter, are the descendants of the imperial Solomon, the representatives of the old Hebrew royalty.

Five hundred years before this, a Hebrew prophet lay on the banks of a Babylonian river in an agony of patriotism and prayer, and the burden of each petition was the return of the captivity and the rebuilding of Jerusalem. At the close of the intercession a celestial courier appeared, and told him more than he had asked to know. Not only did he foretell the building of Jerusalem, but he announced matters far more momentous. He told the time of Christ's coming, and how, "after seventy weeks," reconciliation should be made for iniquity, and an everlasting righteousness should be brought in, causing sacrifice and oblation to cease.

And now that the period had arrived, and this great promise was about to be fulfilled, the same heavenly envoy was despatched to the scene of the evolving mystery. Desirous to look into these things, angels watched his flight. But it was on no lordly mansion that Gabriel descended. Not even in that Holy Land did Tiberias, with its shadowy bowers and rosy terraces, attract his feet; nor Cesarea, with its princely villas, laved by luxurious seas; nor Jerusalem, with its ancient palaces; and what seemed stranger still, not even David's city, the favoured and predicted Bethlehem. But speeding straight towards this outlandish upland village, out of which no good thing had ever come, and which had never once been named in the whole Old Testament story, he dis-

charged his great commission, and announced to the meek and lowly virgin that of all Abraham's daughters it was herself who was destined to be the mother of Messiah. She should have a son, JESUS by name, and "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David; and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end."

Tidings of great joy, when shut up in our feeble minds, grow terrible. The distinction which had come to Mary was one that had for ages lent a dignity and sacredness to the entire Hebrew sisterhood; and now that Mary found it concentrated in herself, the realisation was overwhelming, and the promise which faith did not stagger to receive, it seemed as if reason must stumble to carry. There was no one in that Nazareth to whom she could impart the amazing announcement, and therefore it was a relief to remember that the angel had mentioned her own cousin Elizabeth as the subject of a like interposition; and far away as was the hill country of Judah, Mary made up her mind to the journey, and resolved to seek out her venerable relatives in their highland home.

A certain parity of years is usually essential to frank communion, and to the sympathy which springs from a thorough mutual understanding. But when

the heart is sore troubled, we are apt to look a little upward. We want something superior to ourselves to which to cling—something older, wiser, or better. Had it been any ordinary news or any worldly project, it would have been natural to talk it over to some village companion. But an event so sacred and solemn—an event which had suddenly linked Mary's humble history to the whole of human destiny, and which, if "highly favoured," had also made her feel herself fearfully distinguished—such an event she had no heart to confide to any Nazarene neighbour. But in that distant parsonage there dwelt a godly pair—kind, considerate, strong in the sagacity of the single eye, and bright with the benevolence of an alluring piety. Perhaps Elizabeth might be able to throw some light on the angel's message; at all events, Mary would find soothing and support in that calm and prayerful dwelling.

How she journeyed we do not know; but as she neared the house of Zacharias, many thoughts would arise in her mind. Now would be decided whether what the angel had told about her cousin Elizabeth were true, or whether the whole were not a strange delusion—a wild waking vision. But how astonished they would be to see her! and how was she to explain her errand? As she neared the spot difficulties started up which she had not thought of in her impetuous outset, and the house of the Levite looked

more formidable at the journey's end than when viewed from the cottage in Nazareth. There was no one stirring out of doors, and no one noticed her approach. She ventured in, and so softly did she steal into the quiet chamber that its only occupant, a matron advanced in years, did not observe her entrance. "Cousin Elizabeth, all hail!" trembled from a gentle child-like voice, and instantly springing up and turning round, with a look such as Mary had never seen in her kinswoman before—such a look of awe and ecstasy—the older exclaimed to the younger, "Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the Son thou shalt bear! And how is it that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" Reassured by a salutation so akin to the antecedent miracle, the soul of Mary rushed forth in the rapid and tuneful inspiration of that "Magnificat" which is repeated in the audience of millions day by day:—

"My soul doth magnify the Lord,
And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour,
For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden:
For, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.
For he that is mighty hath done to me great things;
And holy is his name;
And his mercy is on them that fear him,
From generation to generation.
He hath shewed strength with his arm;
He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.
He hath put down the mighty from their seats,
And exalted them of low degree.
He hath filled the hungry with good things,

And the rich he hath sent empty away.
He hath holpen his servant Israel,
In remembrance of his mercy ;
As he spake to our fathers,
To Abraham,
And to his seed for evermore."

Bethlehem, and the First Visit to Jerusalem.

MARY remained in the hill-country of Judah three months, and it was doubtless a profitable season which she spent in that peaceful seclusion. True, the venerable Levite was dumb. As a reproof for his incredulity he had been doomed to a temporary silence; but in the dwellings of the righteous there is an atmosphere of reassuring tranquillity even when the voice of rejoicing is hushed, and when familiar footfalls are heard no longer. Perhaps, too, Zacharias prayed the more when cut off from wonted converse; and the circumstances attending his bereavement added another sign to the many wonders of this eventful season: whilst the soul of her youthful visitor imbibed new faith from the cheerful converse and experienced piety of the "blameless" Elizabeth.

Returning to Nazareth, and, in consequence of a Divine admonition, recognised by Joseph as his affianced bride, "the handmaid of the Lord" was soon called to undertake another pilgrimage. An ancient prophecy, possibly overlooked or obscurely

known by Mary, had fixed on Bethlehem in Judah as the birthplace of Messiah. But to that town Mary had no errand; when, in the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God an incident fell out which sent her thither. It occurred to Cæsar Augustus to take up a census of Palestine; and in order that the enumeration might be systematically conducted, all the inhabitants were ordered to rendezvous at the head-quarters of their respective families; and, as descendants of the royal family, Joseph and his wife set out for David's city.

Bethlehem was a long village, straggling on the ridge of a gray limestone hill, a few miles south from Jerusalem. Its inhabitants prided themselves on their great fellow-citizen, who had founded the Hebrew monarchy. They could shew the stranger the fields where he had herded his sheep—where he had practised his sling on the kites and the eagles—where he had fought the bear and the lion. They could shew the well at the gate which he had drunk of so often, and the field to which his grandmother came a timid young gleaner; and from the airy crest of the town they could point out the purple heights far away where Ruth spent her childhood—the mysterious strange-languaged mountains of Moab.

That evening when Joseph and Mary arrived, Bethlehem looked beautiful; for we have reason to believe that it was the sweet season of spring. It

was pleasant to get away from the bustle and crowd of Jerusalem—out to the open air—out to the freshness of the country. It was pleasant to tread among daisies, anemones, and stars of Bethlehem; and very sweet was the breath of the budding vine, very sweet was the odour crushed from the herbage by the tread of the pilgrims. It was pleasant to hear from yonder fig-tree shade the voice of the turtle, and more pleasant still the merry shouts of boys and girls playing in the hamlets as they passed—and most pleasant of all was the voice of mutual endearment with which the travellers beguiled the last stage of their journey.

And now, as they reached the village entrance, and went in through the sounding gateway, the loungers gazed at the North-country carpenter and his beautiful wife; but little did any one guess that in the arrival of these lowly visitors a prophecy was fulfilled, and Bethlehem ennobled beyond all the thousands of Judah. There was an unusual bustle in the streets. The same decree which had brought one party from Nazareth had summoned many families from other corners of the Holy Land. The village overflowed; and as when people come together, released from wonted avocations and doomed to necessary idleness, there was much wandering to and fro—much talk and buzz—perhaps some foolish merriment. Eagerly did the Galilean strangers seek the inn. It was

impossible. There was no room. Others had been refused already. Nor was there any private house or friendly lodging that would take them in; and weak and weary as she was, Joseph was thankful when he found for his partner a resting-place in the stable.

The night soon gathered. The shouts of the revellers fell silent in the khan, and stillness enfolded Bethlehem. It was that soft season when Eastern shepherds lodge in the fields all night, and a party of these humble peasants kept their bivouac on the adjacent hills. They were David's hills, and as they sat around their watch-fire, and listened to the wolf's "long howl" from yon dark valley, perhaps they sang, "The Lord's my shepherd:"—

" Yea, though I walk in death's dark vale,
Yet will I fear none ill :
For thou art with me ; and thy rod
And staff me comfort still !"

As the mild stars glittered, and among them that strange new one which had lately lit up their firmament; as the thyme gave out its fragrance to the dew, and nothing stirred except where some wakeful lamb was nibbling the cool grass, most likely the weary men were sleeping. But something brilliant burst into their slumber, and, starting up, they found a mysterious daylight round them, and a shining form before them. They were terrified, for they

knew that it was an angel. But he said, “**Fear not:** for I bring you good tidings:—

“To you, in David’s town, this day
Is born, of David’s line,
The Saviour, who is Christ the Lord;
And this shall be the sign:
The heav’nly Babe you there shall find
To human view display’d,
All meanly wrapt in swaddling-bands,
And in a manger laid.”

Hardly had the angel ceased, when the sky brightened with sudden splendour, and melted into music:

“Glory to God in the highest,
On earth peace,
Good-will toward men.”

Oh, it was exquisite that burst of seraphic melody! and as it lapped the listeners round and round, it seemed to sever from all sin: it brought God so near, and filled the spirit with such peace, that the soul could easily have been beguiled out of the body—and as its liquid whisper brought them back and laid them on the earth again, they held their breath in hope that the chorus might burst again. But the guard of honour was going home. The light, the music gathered up itself, and as the pearly portals closed, the air fell dark and dead.

Yes, the angels were gone home again to heaven. But the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go to Bethlehem, and see this thing which has come to

pass, which the Lord has made known to us." Entering the village, and hastening towards the khan, they saw a lamp burning in the stable, and entering in, there assuredly was the new-born babe, wrapped in swaddling-clothes, and lying in a manger. And that is Christ the Lord! That infant is the Saviour! Heaven's gift and earth's benediction! Oh, what a waking will evolve from this soft slumber! Glory to God and peace to the world are calmly sleeping in that cradle!

They told Joseph and Mary what it was that brought them; and as they described the angel's visit, and the aerial orchestra, and repeated all that they had heard, a holy gladness filled the mind of the virgin mother, and the joy of the Lord was strength to her. The shepherds, too, forgetful of all that must happen before that infant could be a man, but feeling as if it were all fulfilled already, went their way, praising God; and for long they trod their hills with recollected step, as favoured men should tread on holy ground; and in the night would sometimes awake and listen, fancying that angelic harps had floated by.

Eight days passed on, and, with the old Hebrew rite, the babe was named. How He should be called, there was no dispute; for the angel had fixed His name beforehand. And so His name was called JESUS.

A month passed on, and according to another appointed usage, His parents went up to Jerusalem. On this auspicious occasion, had they been rich, they would have taken a lamb and a dove as their offering; and had it been a royal churching, there would have swept into the temple courts a splendid cortége, rustling in silks, and blazing with jewels, and the highest functionaries of the temple would have awaited in gorgeous attire the princely procession. But when a poor woman entered, with a babe on one arm, and a little basket with two young pigeons on the other, the whole thing was so common, that the officials were glad to hurry through the ceremony as fast as possible: and although the Lord, whom they pretended to seek, was “suddenly come to His temple,” His arrival would have arrested no notice, if it had not been for the keener susceptibility of two veteran devotees. To one of these, Simeon, it had been specially revealed, that he should not die till he had seen the Messiah; and just as Joseph and Mary were slowly ascending the steps of Moriah, the Holy Spirit revealed to him, “He is come! He is come!” If, for a moment, Simeon expected an imperial presence—a crowned head, and a sceptered hand—his agile faith was not taken aback, and he betrayed no disappointment at the lowly babe: but instantly clasping Him in his arms, he cried,—

“ Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace,
According to thy word :
For mine eyes have seen thy salvation,
Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people ;
A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.”

And as the parents marvelled at the old man's rapture, and as he handed back to Mary the heavenly child, he added, “ This child is set for the fall, and for the restoration of many in Israel ; and for a sign which shall be spoken against, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed : yea, and a sword shall pierce through thine own soul also.” And whilst he spoke, the group was joined by an ancient prophetess, a well known frequenter of the temple precincts, where she lingered all day, and near which she lodged by night. Anna came up, and, sharing Simeon's expectant spirit, she also shared in Simeon's ecstasy. “ Coming in that instant, she likewise gave thanks to the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.”

The words of Simeon, including his hymn of praise, and his address to the mother of our Lord, derive a charm, not only from their piety and the peculiar circumstances in which they were uttered, but they are striking as the last of the Messianic prophecies. In this final and concentrated prediction, we have in brief compass a sketch of Christ's character and office, and are foretold the fortunes of

His Gospel in the world. Like the large-hearted and far-stretching seers of old, but quite unlike the "rude mass" of his modern compatriots,* Simeon exults in the catholicity and comprehensiveness of the great salvation. Perhaps, with Isaiah's cadence in his ear, "In this mountain shall the Lord of Hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees; of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined,"† he describes this great salvation as "prepared before the face of all people;" and whilst, as a patriot, he celebrates "the glory of Israel," as a prophet, he hails "the Light of the Gentiles." Yes, it is not Abraham, nor David; it is not Moses, nor Solomon; but it is Jesus who is to be the glory of Israel; and other nations may boast of having yielded sages and saints, but it is Israel's boast to have yielded to the world its Saviour. To the world, for Israel's glory is the Light of the Gentiles. When the Egyptian princess gazed on the bulrush ark, she did not think that the babe there weeping was to be a mightier man than any Pharaoh of them all, and would leave a name to outlast the Pyramids. But when Simeon gazed on the virgin's child, he knew its mighty destinies, and his heart beat thick to think how soon from these swaddling-bands would unfold, not Israel's second Lawgiver, but the Light-giver to mankind. Yes, this spark of im-

* Olshausen.

† Is. xxv. 6.

mortality, this soft and cloud-like innocence, is yet to flame forth the Sun of Righteousness, and, all unlike the giant of the firmament, who can only lighten a single hemisphere with his world-embracing beams, Jesus shall lighten every land; and although exhalations from the abyss may for a season intercept His beams, whatever spot admits them, Waldensian valley or Bohemian forest, Lapland hut or English palace, that spot, deriving light direct from heaven, will be a Goshen amid surrounding gloom.

Peculiar privileges are accorded to eminent piety. It is possible that Simeon and Anna may not have been altogether alike; but they were both of them remarkably good. The one was "just and devout;" a man of uprightness and probity, as well as of religious profession; an old cedar, sound at the core, and with his branches green; by the godly loved for his heavenly-mindedness, and by all men revered for his virtues. And Anna—there was one thing which she desired of the Lord, and sought after, that she might dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of her life, to behold His beauty, and to inquire in His temple. Since her own dwelling had darkened, and she left, mayhap on Asher's sounding shore, the husband of her youth, she had sought no other home than God's own house. Her Maker was her husband, and she knew no dearer joy than to serve Him with

prayers and fastings night and day. At early dawn, when the crimson east was reflected from the temple gates, and before the silver trumpets had sent their warbling summons to royalty asleep in yonder palace, and to the population dreaming on yon smokeless house-tops, Anna often was waiting and ready to enter as soon as the guards had flung open the ponderous doors. And at night, when the Levites had refreshed with new fuel the golden altar, and the lamps burned clear in the holy shrine; when the outer court was hushed—for traders and worshippers were mostly gone—and lights began to flicker from the cloister windows, with nothing to lure her back to mortal dwellings, and with God himself, her sun and shield, to retain her where she was, Anna was among the last to withdraw. But in whatever they resembled or differed, Simcon and Anna were alike in their piety. They were both of them loyal to the God of their fathers. They were both of them saintly survivors of the simple faith of an earlier time. And they were both of them expectant believers, who had Christ in their hearts long before they found Him in their arms. They looked for redemption; they longed for the consolation of Israel. And He who gives grace for grace surprised His servants with a rare and remarkable blessing. For one thing, he endowed them with the spirit of prophecy. Since Malachi, inspiration had vanished from the Holy

Land ; and it was at once a sign of the Advent, and a distinction conferred on these two eminent worshippers, that in them, amongst the first, the silence broke, and the lost gift was revived. Anna the prophetess was the successor of Miriam and Deborah ; and Simeon summed up that long series of Messianic prophecies to which David and Isaiah had been the largest contributors. The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him. And it was in virtue of this prophetic power that they were enabled to detect their own felicity ; for the same Holy Spirit who awakened in them the longing for Christ's day, told them when Christ was come. By making them pure in heart, He fitted them for seeing God ; and by making them prophets, He assured them that it was God whom now they saw. The Angel of the Covenant was paying His first visit to the temple, but the numerous dangles at its gates saw nothing but an infant carried in. The worshippers in the courts knelt, and kept repeating, "Speedily, speedily ; Lord, come to thy temple speedily ;" and little dreamed that the answer to their prayer was actually arrived. The hirelings at the altar saw a poor couple approach, and contemptuously eyed the scanty offer. And even the priest presiding little surmised his high prerogative ; he little thought that his mitred predecessor, who at that same altar had awaited the Queen of Solomon, was less distinguished, and that, in days to come, no prelate at an emperor's

christening would receive into his arms so august an infancy. But what was hid from worldly sagacity, and from sacerdotal formalism; what was hid from the wise and prudent, was revealed to the meek faith and penetrating eye of these Heaven-taught worthies; and however long or short they tarried after this, Simeon and Anna trod the streets of Jerusalem with a consciousness which its proudest citizen might envy. They had seen the great salvation. They had seen the Christ of God. They had received into their hands, and pressed to their adoring bosoms the promised seed, the woman's Son, the Man Jehovah. To them it was no longer faith, but sight. Their new economy had dawned: their New Testament existence was begun. They had found their Gospel in yonder temple, and whenever they departed from this world, they would leave Immanuel in it.

This incident also shews us that before leaving the world, God's people are made willing to go. Up to that moment, Simeon would have been loth to depart; but the instant he saw this great salvation, he was in haste to be gone. Sometimes, in pacing the shore of that great ocean which you are soon to cross, solemn thoughts have arisen: "Why this clinging to mortality? Why this love of life, this fear of dying? Can I belong to Christ, and yet so deprecate departing to be with Him?" But if you are

really His, He will arrange it all most excellently. The wicked may be driven away in their sins, or they may be dragged to a dreaded tribunal; but the believer will tarry till he can say, "Now, Lord, lettest thou thy servant depart in peace." And this the Lord usually effects by loosening that chain which held him to this life, or by presenting such a strong attraction that the chain is broken unawares. The summer before good old Professor Wodrow died, "Principal Stirling's lady came in to see him," as his son, the historian, tells us; "and he said to her, 'Mrs Stirling, do you know the place in the new kirkyard that is to be my grave?' She answered, she did. 'Then,' says he, 'the day is good, and I'll go through the Principal's garden into it, and take a look of it.' Accordingly, they went, and when they came to the place, as near as she could guess, she pointed it out to him, next to Principal Dunlop and her own son and only child. He looked at it, and lay down upon the grass, and stretched himself most cheerfully on the place, and said, 'Oh, how satisfying it would be to me to lay down this carcass of mine in this place, and be delivered from my prison; but it will come in the Lord's time.'"* But although for more than forty years this cheerful Christian had never one day doubted his heavenly Father's love,

* Life of James Wodrow, A.M., Professor of Divinity in the University of Glasgow, p. 180.

it was not till his own dear children had gone before, and till manifold infirmities made the flesh a burden, that he felt thus eager to put off the tabernacle. That was the weaning process. Nevertheless, the Lord has other ways. Were you prematurely rending the calyx which contains the coming rose or lily, perhaps it would refuse to blow at all, or at best you would only get a crumpled stunted flower. God's way is better. With gushing summer He fills the bud within; with sap and strength He makes it glad at heart, till the withering cerement bursts, and the ripened fragrance floats through all the air of June. The soul must be ripe within, and then it easily puts off this tabernacle. And nothing matures it faster for that immortal expansion than an abundant joy. And just as, after a continuance of cold and gloomy days, you have seen one balmy sun-burst let loose whole fleets of waiting blossoms—so a single bright incident, one smile from Jehovah's countenance, will be the propitious moment when the soul would gladly quit the body of sin, and breathe the better air for ever. From the hour he was shewn that gory vesture, and realised his Joseph torn to pieces, Jacob had nothing to desire in life, and knew no attraction greater than the grave. And yet he had not heart to die. It was not till that amazing hour when he found weeping on his neck the child so long lamented, and saw, in stalwart strength and regal grandeur, the

very form which he had so often pictured in the lion's cranching jaws, that Israel said to Joseph, "Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, because thou art yet alive." 'I am happy. I have nothing more to wish. This gladness gives me strength to go.' And so with many of God's servants. Like Simeon—though perhaps without Simeon's promise—they are waiting for something. They could die happy if they were only more assured of their interest in Christ, or if they only saw the good work begun in some soul very dear to them. They would gladly depart if they might first witness some great salvation—if they might only behold the destruction of Antichrist, or the triumph of the Gospel in the world. Perhaps in His great indulgence the Lord grants the very blessing; but at all events He knows how to put such gladness in the heart that glory shall surround the soul before it has leisure to surmise that the body is dissolved.

Of all these antidotes to death, there is none like Jesus in the arms. Of all those attractions which charm the spirit into everlasting life, there is none like the desire to depart and be with Christ. That we may understand it, let us pray for the Holy Spirit, who made Simeon's eye so perspicacious, and Simeon's heart so warm. Let us seek to see in Jesus what Simeon saw, and then we, too, may feel what Simeon felt.

Is Jesus our salvation? God has prepared a feast of fat things before the face of all people ;—have we found satisfaction in the heavenly provision ? or, like the rich ones of earth—the self-righteous, the voluptuous, and the rationalists —are we passing empty away? In the atonement wrought out by God's dear Son, do our faint and sin-hurt souls welcome a cordial like reviving wine ; and have the Saviour's words of grace come to our spirits like cold water in the desert to a thirsty soul? Have we ever felt the hunger after righteousness? and, listening to Christ's holy words, have we ever perceived in them a Divine deliciousness? and feeling as if our souls began to live by them, have we been ready to exclaim, "Lord, evermore give us this bread?" Are we satisfied with the Lord's Christ, and with his sin-cleansing, soul-renovating salvation? We are Gentiles : Is Jesus our "light?" Is Jesus our Sun? Has He shone upon our path, and do we now see the way to immortality? Has He revealed to us the Father, and we who once sat in darkness, do we now see God as holy, yet forgiving ; as righteous, and yet reconciled? Is Jesus our Lodestar? Do we love Him? Do we eye Him? On the deep, do we steer by Him? In the desert, do we direct our steps by Him? Are His wishes law to us? Is His pattern our incentive? His "well done" our ample recompense? And has Jesus made us luminous? Are we

radiant with grace and truth received from His fullness? Does His spirit shine in us? Do those that know our meekness, and charity, and zeal, and courage, take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus?

The last sand from Time's hour-glass
Shall soon disappear ;
And like vapour shall vanish
This old-rolling sphere.

Off the floor, like the chaff-stream
In the dark windy day,
From the fan of destruction
Shall suns drift away :

And the meteors of glory
Which wilder the wise,
Only gleam till we open
In true worlds our eyes.

But aloft in God's heaven
There blazes a Star,
And I live whilst I'm watching
Its light from afar.

From its lustre immortal
My soul caught the spark,
Which shall beam on undying
When the sunshine is dark.

So transforming its radiance,
Its strength so benign,
The dull clay burns a ruby
And man grows divine.

To the zenith ascended
From Joseph's dark tomb,
Star of Jesse ! so rivet
My gaze 'midst the gloom ;

That thy beauty imbibing
My dross may refine,
And in splendour reflected
I burn and I shine.

The Wilderness.

BEAUTIFUL were the bowers where man woke up to existence, and nothing could be lovelier than the scene destined to prove the decisive battle-field of human history. The representatives of our race had great advantages. They were strong in spirit. To one another they were bound by fondest affection, and their Creator was their companion and friend. They had not the least cloud on their conscience, nor the slightest infirmity in their frame. They were healthy, and holy, and happy. The stake was immense, and the interests involved were enormous. The stake was two worlds, and the depending interests were a hundred generations. But though all was so favourable; though every motive was so urgent, and the means of resistance so great, no defeat could be more dire and disastrous. Heaven was forfeited, and earth was enslaved. The vanquished combatants became the prey of the victor, and all their descendants were thenceforward the captives of Satan, given over to the bondage of corruption.—

An overthrow which was mainly owing to the tremendous power of the adversary. Originally one of the mightiest of created beings, he had fallen from his high estate, and, retaining most of his strength and intelligence, he had become the enemy of God and all goodness. For the ends of Infinite Wisdom, along with his associate angels, allowed a temporary range, he was devoting the interval to the perpetration of all the evil which malice could suggest or craft could carry through; and in the progenitors of a new and noble family he found a target on which he resolved to spare no arrows—a specimen of the Creator's handiwork, which he hoped and vowed to demolish. His plans were skilfully laid; and, partly by a cunning ambush, and partly by a stroke of astounding audacity, he conquered, first the one and then the other; and, as he retreated from the scene, a momentary exultation swelled his fiendish breast; for snakes were hissing and beasts of prey were roaring; there was poison in the streams, and sulphur in the air; there was mildew on the flowers, and a creeping death through all the garden; whilst—rarest joy to his devil's heart!—the joint-partners of Paradise were upbraiding one another, and as, in anger, and shame, and terror, they skulked into the shade, those to whom their Maker had so lately been their chiefest joy, were wishing that there were no God at all.

“For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.” To spoil the spoiler, to destroy destruction, and to lead captive captivity, was His God-like enterprise; and we are now come to the first of those conflicts which are to end in overturning the empire of Apollyon. Adam was a champion, and so was Christ. Each represented a race. Adam represented mankind; Christ represented His Church, or humanity redeemed. And just as in the old heroic times, it was not unusual for the leaders of opposing hosts to challenge one another, and fight out the quarrel in single combat, whilst either army looked on; so now, in the history of redemption, we are arrived at another of these single-handed encounters, which makes the opening of the Gospels as solemn and eventful as the outset of the Bible.

No sooner was Jesus baptized than the Spirit bore Him away to the desert, and on very purpose that He should engage in this combat. “Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil.” For this the time was the fittest, when He was newly designated to His high office, and before He had entered on its manifold engagements; and, we may add, no time of spiritual preparation could be fitter, than when the voice of complacent Deity still lingered in His ear, and His soul was still rejoicing in that oil of gladness with which He had been anointed above all His fellows.

Wherever the desert was, it must have been a very lonely place; for Mark tells us, "He was with the wild beasts." What a contrast to the lot of the first Adam does this single coincidence suggest! Here are the wild beasts, and here is one in God's own image—and these dumb creatures know Him. It is the lion's den and the mountain of leopards, but night by night the pilgrim lays Him down and takes His quiet sleep fearing no evil: and in the day-time, assured by His mild aspect, the conies of the cliff gambol at His feet, and the rock-pigeon circles in fond gyrations round that attractive gentleness on whom the celestial dove so lately rested. But except this homage of the mute creation, there is nothing that looks like Eden; no fragrant alcove, no woodland songsters, no murmuring rills, no ripe clusters dropping into earth's green lap: but the dry ravines, and the staring precipices, and the burning sand, pinnacles blasted by the sirocco and glazed by the lightning—the haunt of the satyr and the nest of the vulture—arid, calcined, hot—the embers of a world in ruin, the skeleton from which the paradise has been torn off and hurled away.

But here, amidst the silence, Jesus found a sacred occupation for the six successive weeks. Released from the toils of Nazareth, and from its interruptions, He had continuous leisure to meditate on the work given Him to do, and the Son of man became familiar

with those high thoughts which had ever been habitual to the Son of God. Doubtless, prophetic Scripture extended its panorama to His eye, and one by one He pondered those things concerning Himself which must now have an end; and for the work given Him to do He fortified His willing soul by every consideration which the joy set before Him—the glory of God and the salvation of man—could supply. Without intruding too far into the seclusion of this long Sabbath, we believe the tuneful theologian has not greatly erred in saying:—

“Through that unfathomable treasury
Of sacred thoughts, and counsels, and decrees,
Built in the palace of eternity,
And safely locked with three massy keys,
Whereof Himself by proper right keeps one,
With intellectual lightness now he ran.

“And there He to His human soul unveil’d
The flaming wonders of Divinity;
A sea through which no seraph’s eye e’er sail’d,
So vast, so high, so deep those secrets be.
(God’s nearest friend the soul of Jesus is,
Whom he admits to all his privacies).

“There in an adamantine table, by
The hand of goodness fairly writ,
He saw his Incarnation’s Mystery,
The reasons, wonders, and the ways of it:
Then freely ranged His contemplation, from
His scorned cradle to His guarded tomb.”*

For most of the period, the absorption of His mind made Him independent of the body; but “when he

* Beaumont’s “Psyche,” (1702) canto ix. 145-7.

had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungered." He found Himself weak and exhausted, and had there been a field of standing corn, or a fig-tree—nay, had there been the Baptist's locusts and honey—He would doubtless have taken food and sustained His fainting soul. And just at this instant there joined Him a stranger—the first He had seen in this desolate spot—and made a suggestion. Not improbably in the guise of a holy hermit, possibly assuming to be one of John's disciples, who, in the eagerness of his devotion, had followed the Messiah into His retirement, and was at last rejoiced to overtake Him ; he pitied His emaciation, and said, " If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." It was the devil in disguise. He had his doubts whether Jesus were indeed the Son of God, and the fiery dart was barbed at either end. If Jesus were not the Son of God, He would be very apt to try ; and failing to make loaves from the stones, Satan's anxiety would be ended ; the Prince of Darkness still might keep his goods in peace. On the other hand, if Jesus were indeed God's Son, what could be a simpler expedient ? Surely His heavenly Father had forgotten Him. No manna had fallen from the sky ; no raven had brought Him bread and flesh ;—no, never once all these forty evenings. If not speedily relieved, He must sink and die ; and then what would become of all His projects ? If He was

to be the Saviour of others, it was His first duty to preserve His own life ; and how could He do this in a way more innocent or more worthy of His own exalted origin ? See these stony fragments—these petrified cakes of bread ; they invite you to transform them ; you have but to say the word, and lo ! you have instantly spread for yourself a table in the wilderness.

Nothing could have been easier ; but that simple thing would have stopped the world's salvation. It would have been the tragedy of Eden re-enacted—the story of the Forbidden Fruit repeated. Nothing could have been easier ; and He who a few days after made water into wine, could have given the command, and nectar would have foamed from the crag, and a board laden with the rarest viands would have risen from the ground. But, in that case, the bread which came down from heaven would have been recalled, and this world of empty hungry souls must have been left to pine and perish. In doing it, in using for His own relief those miraculous powers which He held for a specific purpose, He would have renounced the form of a servant, and would have violated a great law, on which the whole of His incarnate history proceeded. That law left all the circumstances of His outward lot to be determined by His Father's good pleasure ; and just as He never used for His own comfort those resources which were the constant enrichment of others—as in subsequent days He never bade foun-

tains gush for the assuagement of His thirst, nor overcanopied with a miraculous shelter His own houseless head—as He did not, when surrounded by priestly myrmidons, give the signal to angelic legions, nor startle the mocking crowd by descending from the cross—so now He would neither astonish the tempter, nor outrun the course of God's Providence by summoning a repast from the dust of the desert. Recalling that passage where Moses tells Israel how, in regions where corn never grew and flock never fed, the Most High had regaled them with feasts from the firmament, He reminded His specious adviser that the fiat of Jehovah is sustenance as sure as the produce of the fields. Like the dexterous and scarcely perceptible movement of the skilful swordsman, the text at once transfixed the temptation, and the adversary reeled back when reminded, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

Such was the first temptation, and such was its success—a success very different from that subtle insinuation which opened the fatal parley under the Tree of Knowledge, "Yea, and hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree?" Here, there was no surprise, no hesitation, no encouragement to follow up the hinted doubt by a bold denial; but like a flaming missile which drops into a vacuum, and instantly expires, that fiery dart found nothing in the holy soul

of Jesus; and before it had time to smoulder into a wrong desire, or the smallest spark of sin, the fire was out, the dart was dead—the temptation never tempted.

This first incident may teach us the subtilty of Satan. There can be little doubt, we think, that in the first instance the tempter came, if not as an absolute angel of light, at least in some harmless form, and with friendly professions. Whether “the aged man, in rural weeds,” whom our great bard has pictured—or the “old man his devotions singing,” whom an earlier poet* represents as “lowting low with prone obeisance and curtsey kind”—or, as we have ventured to suggest, some modest and ingenuous-looking inquirer—there was assuredly nothing in his aspect to alarm suspicion, or draw from the horrified beholder, a “Satan, avaunt!” And if his mien was plausible, his speech was smooth. Along with his desire to identify the Saviour, he wished still more to stagger His faith; and such is the audacity of him, who, if possible, would deceive the very elect, that on this occasion he sought to make the very Christ an infidel. “If thou be the Son of God!” ‘If that was a true testimony which you received at Jordan—if you believe that voice which you so lately heard from heaven, though present appearances, methinks, belie it—if you really believe yourself to be the beloved Son of God, command these stones to be made

* Giles Fletcher.

bread.' And yet, though the blasphemy was so bold that you would fancy it must have affrighted its author, it did not disturb his composure, nor did it agitate his mind so as to interfere with his cunning. And although to the Prince of Darkness it was a critical moment, and not impossibly might hurl him into an instantaneous and deeper perdition, such self-control had long practice in all atrocities given him, that he was able to enter on the awful experiment without any visible tremor, and could put forth his suggestion with all the naivete of innocence, and all the kindness of anxious compassion.

And not to say that the villany is worst which is the most graceful and accomplished, the temptation is, to a religious or respectable man, the most dangerous, which solicits him to the doing of some little thing. Dr A. Clarke had a very attentive hearer, who was often much affected by the Word, but who never could find peace in believing. At last he turned ill, and after many interviews, Dr Clarke said, "Sir, it is not often that God deals thus with a soul so deeply humbled as yours, and so earnestly seeking redemption through the blood of His Son. There must be a cause for this." The gentleman raised himself in bed, and fixing his eyes on the minister, told how, years ago, taking his voyage to England, he saw some merchants of the place give the captain a bag of dollars to carry to a correspondent. He

marked the captain's carelessness in leaving it rolling on the locker day after day, and, for the purpose of frightening him, he hid it. No inquiry was made, and on arriving at their destination, the merchant still retained it, till it should be missed. At last the parties to whom it was consigned inquired for it, and an angry correspondence commenced; hearing of which the gentleman got frightened, and resolved to keep his secret. The captain was thrown into prison, and died. "Guilt," added the dying man, "had by this time hardened my mind. I strove to be happy by stifling my conscience with the cares and amusements of the world—but in vain. I at last heard you preach; and then it was that the voice of God broke in on my conscience, and reasoned with me of righteousness, and of judgment to come. Hell got hold upon my spirit: I have prayed; I have deplored; I have agonised at the throne of mercy, for the sake of Christ, for pardon; but God is deaf to my prayer, and casts out my petition: there is no mercy for me; I must go down into the grave unpardoned, unsaved." The captain's widow was still alive, and to her and her children Dr Clarke was the medium of paying over the sum, with compound interest, obtaining an acknowledgment, which he kept till his dying day; and soon after, the conscience-stricken penitent died in peace, having obtained the hope of pardon. But the incident illustrates the subtilty of Satan

The man was respectable, and had it been put to him, "Are you capable of stealing? Do you think you could commit a murder? Are you one that could allow an innocent man to languish in prison for your crime, and go down to the grave covered with infamy, for a fault which, not he, but you committed?" "Is thy servant a dog?" would have been the indignant reply to the revolting suggestion. But for fine-grained timber, for oaks and cedars, the devil has sharp wedges, as well as coarser instruments for ignoble natures; and here the edge was very fine: a trick—a practical jest—a frolic—but a frolic which, like many fools' firebrands, ended in a sad conflagration; in theft and murder, in orphanage and widowhood, in the ruin of a reputation, and in the misery and remorse of the perpetrator.

As a set-off, we may mention a simple incident in the life of a pious servant. She was in a family where next to nothing was given for religious or charitable objects; and one morning, in arranging one of the rooms, she found a bag containing a number of guineas. The temptation instantly occurred, "Should not I take two of these gold pieces? I could get silver for them, and I know several poor people who stand in great need of some assistance. But if I do not give it to them, I am sure that not one farthing of the money will ever go that way." It was a plausible suggestion—for her object was benevo-

lent; and as she went on with her work she still thought of the gold pieces and the shivering poor, till she made up her mind that to take them was perfectly right. With this view she was returning to the bag, when these words of God rushed into her memory, "I hate robbery for burnt-offering;" and, scared away by this opportune scripture, the temptation fled, and the poor servant escaped as a bird from the snare of the fowler.* She had the advantage of being not only respectable but religious, and He who on this occasion rescued her from the snare of the devil, kept her by His mighty power to an honoured old age and a joyful departure. For her escape this humble disciple was indebted to the self-same weapon which the Captain of her salvation wielded in the wilderness—that sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God.

Jesus greatly needed bread, but the tempter dared not hint to Him to procure it by means of fraud or violence. The utmost he could hope was that, wearied out with long waiting, He might be induced to help Himself, and, instead of trying to live any longer on the Father's mere promise, that He might adopt a suggestion which would appease His hunger and injure no one. And as it is this "bread" which forms our great necessity, so it is to unbelieving and unchristian ways of procuring it that we are mainly tempted.

* "Jean Smith." By the Rev. J. Morison, Port-Glasgow.

The devil does not say to us, "Drill a hole in yonder jeweller's shutter: forge a bank-note: knock down a passenger and steal his purse;" but he says, "You must live, and in order to live you must have bread. You have tried every way, but God has done nothing for you. This waiting won't do—you must see to yourself. Suppose you take a ticket in the lottery, or try your luck at cards or billiards? Or what would you say to open a public house, or take shares in a Sunday tavern? You have a fine voice; you might sing in the choir of a Popish chapel. You have a turn for recitation; I have seen many a worse actor on the stage." And in this way, by making the bread that perisheth the prime necessity, and the soul a thing quite secondary, many have been tempted to gamble, to borrow from their employer's till, to open shop on Sunday, to use the balances of deceit, to forge, to purloin, to peculate—till at last, entangled by snare upon snare, they sank down reprobate and reckless, disgusted with this world, and despairing of the next one, scarcely caring, and never hoping to burst that bond of iniquity in which the devil leads them captive at his will.

PART II.

FOILED in one stratagem, the tempter instantly tried another; and that other was not only necessitated but was most likely suggested by the failure of the first. In his dealings with mankind, the devil had so often found virtues leaning to frailty's side—he had reaped so many of his greatest successes by pressing good points to an inordinate extreme, that he hoped to extract some sin from the excessive faith of Jesus. It would appear the greatest delight of the incarnate Son to depend on the love and power of His heavenly Father; might He not be induced to carry that dependence too far, and so render it not devout but presumptuous? Was there no fine stroke which would convert this faith into fanaticism? Accordingly, the scene was changed; and no longer in the waste and howling wilderness, they found themselves in the Holy City and on the battlements of the Temple. Looking down from the dizzy elevation, they had a full view of all the worshippers; and His

assiduous attendant at once suggested to the Saviour that He should cast Himself down into their midst. 'You are the Son of God? You are about to begin your ministry? Where more fitly can you commence it, than here in God's own house? And in what manner more striking can you make your first manifestation to Israel, than just by floating down, from the clouds, as it would look, into the centre of that throng? The Messenger of the Covenant would then, indeed, be suddenly come to His temple, and instant acclamations would welcome the Heaven-descended Messiah.' Further, having in the previous encounter not only detected Jesus' faith in God, but His fondness for Scripture, with wonderful adroitness the tempter turns it to his purpose—not merely assailing what he suspected to be the weak point, but plying that point with what he deemed the most effective weapon. 'Your trust in God is wonderful. Such is your confidence in His promises that you would not help yourself to food, for fear of shewing doubt or impatience. You spoke as if you could subsist on these promises. If they will do for food, they will surely do for wings. Here is an opportunity of shewing your sincerity. *I* say to you, cast Thyself down; and *God* says He shall give His angels charge concerning thee, and in their hands they shall bear Thee up. There is no escape. If you be the Son of God, you must give me this sign. The promise is

buoyant. The air teems with angels ; and up-borne in their hands you will not hurt your foot on the pavement.'

Need we say how alien from the entire genius of Christ's procedure such a demonstration would have been ? Radiant with Divine energy as He was, He veiled His glory, and reserved His resources ; and even when in after days a wonder was wrought, the most wonderful thing was the simplicity with which it transpired. So little was done for effect, so little of scenic glare or intentional display was there in the miracles of Jesus, that His familiar attendants saw Him constantly opening blind eyes, healing incurables, and raising the dead, without feeling as if aught very strange were taking place. Not only had they come to regard Him as one from whom such things proceeded spontaneously, and very much as things of course, but He had a way of doing them which, although it added to their eventual sublimity, lessened their *éclat* at the moment. Like Himself and His kingdom, Christ's miracles came without observation. There was nothing dramatic or explosive about them. No trumpet sounded beforehand—no flush of exultation followed ; but whilst the lame man was yet leaping, and the crowd was still gazing, Jesus went on His way. His mighty deeds were not the rare efforts of a borrowed power, but the forth-letting of a familiar and redundant omnipotence ; and being wrought

by a Divine Personage in a holy disguise, He had rather to restrain than exhibit His resources. Convincing and endearing, they did not dazzle nor excite; and, in short, like the fiat of the Creator, which might any moment add a new lily to the field, or a new lamp to the firmament, the mighty deeds of Jesus were neither noisy portents nor ostentatious prodigies, but miracles—the stately emanations of that mighty Will which does nothing for display, and to which the hosannahs of a crowded temple, or the shouts of Morning Stars, would be alike a poor requital.

To introduce Himself to the Jewish people by a flight from on high, would have been to commence on a key-note entirely out of unison with His lowly ministry; and, besides, it would have pandered to that taste for the marvellous, which prefers to a God-like miracle a vulgar prodigy. Satan knew this, and so knew the Saviour. But instead of arguing the question, the Captain of salvation fell back on, “Thus it is written.” Scripture is the interpreter of Scripture; and just as one Divine perfection may set limits to another—as God’s wisdom may be the limit of His power—as His truth or holiness may be the limit of His benevolence—so, in Scripture, one truth may be the limit of another; or, as in the case before us, a precept may be the limit of a promise. It is true God gives to His angels a charge concerning His

saints, but then He gives his saints a charge concerning themselves; and if the angels are not to forget the saints, neither are the saints to tempt the Lord their God. Observe the condition, and the result is infallible. Fulfil you the precept, and God will fulfil the promise. But to leap from this pinnacle when there is no end to be answered—to spring into the air when it is not God, but Satan, who gives the command—this is to tempt Jehovah; and God's will must be done, even although the doing of it should look so pusillanimous as to provoke a sneer from the devil.

A most instructive incident, teaching us the importance of comparing Scripture with Scripture. A text may be wrested—witness the tempter's quotation; but the Scriptures cannot be broken—witness the Saviour's retort. Some people split the Bible. They set aside all the precepts, and appropriate all the promises; they cull out all the doctrines, and do away with all the duties; and in this one-sided fashion they never become the blessed and beautiful characters which that Bible could make them. Like those quadrumanous mimics of mankind whose hand lacks an opposable finger, their thumbless theology goes on all fours, and it bears the same relation to revealed religion as the ape or the satyr bears to humanity. Others, again, select from the Bible a series of ethical maxims; and, ignoring all which it reveals

of sin and the Saviour, they treat it as a manual of excellent morality. Their model has all the form and features which go to constitute ethical symmetry or ideal perfection ; and like the strings or clock-work which bends the limbs and opens and shuts the eyes of such a figure, it may not be without impulses and motives of its own ; but, as long as it lacks a soul, after all, it is only an automaton. That character is alone complete where life develops in symmetry—where love to God inspires the heart, and His revealed will decides the conduct.

An instructive incident, further, as shewing the difference between faith and fanaticism. Faith listens to God's voice, and follows where Scripture leads it by the hand. Fanaticism has inward lights, and mystic voices, and new revelations, and scorns the sober ways, the good old paths of the written record. Faith compares Scripture with Scripture, and with docile patience gathers from its sundry places the entire mind of the Spirit. Fanaticism, when it deigns to consult the Word at all, is proud and precipitate, and pouncing on the text which serves its turn, has no tolerance for any other which would restrict or expand its meaning. Faith has a creed of many articles, and its decalogue has ten commands. Fanaticism resolves morality into a solitary virtue, and its orthodoxy is summed up in a single tenet. Such a fanatic, had he heard on the temple-roof a

whisper in his ear, "Cast thyself down hence," would scarcely have waited to ascertain whether the voice came from a good spirit or a demon; or had he paused for a moment, and then been reminded of the promise, "For he shall give his angels charge concerning thee," he would have felt it a crime to hesitate. But he that believeth will not make such haste; and after hearing both the suggestion and the Scripture proof, that great Believer to whom it was addressed held up to the proposal the torch of truth, and declared it presumptuous and Heaven-provoking.

Reader, try the spirits. Error is often plausible, and the most ensnaring errors are those which have an obvious resemblance to truth. Even though the outside coating is not brass but real gold, the leaden coin is none the less a counterfeit; and, like the devil's temptation, wrapped up in a Scripture saying, many false doctrines come now-a-days with a sacred or a spiritual glamour round them—quoting texts and uttering Bible phrases. But the question is not, Who has got a text on his side? but, Who has got the Bible?—not, Who can produce certain sentences torn from their connexion, and reft of the purport which that connexion gives them? but, Looking at Scripture in its integrity—having regard to its general drift, as well as to the bearing of these special passages—who is it that makes the fairest appeal to the statute-book of Heaven?

A second time baffled, there remained another bolt in the grim archer's quiver. The Son-like confidence of Jesus had never faltered; and neither to the left hand of distrust, nor to the right hand of presumption, had the fiercest shocks been able to bend His columnar constancy. The tactics were, therefore, changed. Sudden surprise had failed, stratagem had failed, and plausible hypocritical suggestion had failed. If the devil himself had doubted the Sonship of the Saviour, these doubts were at an end—for there is no conditional "If thou be" in the last temptation; and if he had hoped to make the Saviour for a moment question His own paternity, that hope was over—for he now leaves the point in abeyance. But Lucifer remembered the temptation which had prevailed with himself, when "he fell from service to a throne;" and surmising that the nobler the nature the more likely it was to feel the attractions of glory, he thought he knew what would deflect from His orbit the Sun of Righteousness Himself. Borne away to some lofty hill, a magic prospect rose up. They saw the river which bears the wealth of mysterious mountains to Egypt's green valley, and on whose banks the Pharaohs sleep grandly in their sphinx-guarded sepulchres. They saw the bright isles of Greece, on whose summits white temples sparkled, and on whose strand the bounding billows clapped their musical cymbals.

They saw the Seven Hills, and the proud capitol, like an Atlas, bending under its mountain of marble. They saw the pearls still deep in the ocean, and the diamonds not yet dug from the mine. They saw the Indian pagoda rainbowed with gems, and the Peruvian sun-temple with its mirrors of flashing gold. And a mist of music came floating up from the glory; and as its murmur waxed clearer and resolved into a thousand tones, along with the note of the nightingale came pulses of the lyre from fragrant Italy; from yonder Attic groves a flow of silvery sweetness, and from that swarming forum words of sharp and ringing energy: whilst wafted from those red Parthian fields, and louder than far-off Niagara, rent the air a long loud shout of Roman victory. "All that is mine; and one obeisance will make it yours," cried the tempter: and as he spake, a diadem flamed on his brow, and he stood forth every inch a king. The costliest bait ever flung at the feet of Innocence—the Man of Nazareth looked at it with an eye that did not sparkle, and a heart that did not flutter: then turning to the princely tempter, He exclaimed, "Get thee behind me, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." Oh, what a smile from the heart of the Father burst in at these words on the soul of the beloved Son; and what a sob of triumph relieved the suspended breath of spectator angels! It was the

first great victory of the Second Adam. It was the turning of the tide in the history of our defeated and enslaved humanity. It was a triumph where the gain was all on the side of goodness; and from which the azure banner of the Eternal Law came back without one speck on its lustre, or a moment's recession of its planted sign. It was the great enslaver and tyrant defeated, and the earnest of paradise regained. 'Get thee behind me, Satan. I hope to see these kingdoms and all their glory my own: but I shall earn them, not by doing homage to the usurper, but by obedience to my Father—by worshipping the Lord my God.'

It was a glorious victory, and, reader, it was ours. It was the victory of our Head and Representative. It was the Second Adam doing what the first should have done, and so far undoing the evil which he did. It was the scene in the garden reversed; it was the crime of another Fall escaped, and the curse of Eden read backwards. It was the embodiment of all evil encountered and overcome by the Church's great Champion: encountered in those successive forms of temptation which had so often proved fatal; as the sympathising visitor with a friendly suggestion—as the scoffing spectator with a taunting challenge—as the gross and open seducer with the most splendid lure ever offered to ambition; and overcome, not by the mere might of Omnipotence, but by those weapons

which all along had lain ready for such exigencies in the Church's armoury.

Blessed Jesus, we thank Thee! We could not have done it. But Thou hast broken the snare of the fowler, and along with Thee our silly souls are escaped. O Lion of the tribe of Judah, our adversary still goeth about seeking whom he may devour. Make us aware of his devices. Bruise him under our feet. Succour us when tempted. Touched with a feeling of our infirmities, Thou who wast in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin, let us fight beneath Thy buckler, and teach us how to wield Thy sword—that sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.

Miracles.

- I. CANA : THE WEDDING FEAST.**
- II. BETHESDA : A REMARKABLE RECOVERY.**
- III. NAIN : THE INTERRUPTED FUNERAL.**
- IV. GADARA : THE DEMONS EXPELLED.**
- V. THE DESERT NEAR BETHSAIDA : THE MULTITUDE FED.**
- VI. THE SEA OF GALILEE : THE TEMPEST STILLED.**
- VII. THE FAME OF JESUS : SUCCESSFUL INTERCESSION.**

Cana: The Wedding Feast.

BY the modern system of chapter-divisions, which has in some instances been arbitrarily or unskilfully carried out, it is to be regretted that the story of Cana is cut in sunder. In other words, it is to be regretted that the beginning of the second chapter of St John's Gospel is so seldom read in immediate connexion with the close of the chapter preceding.

Nathanael, the "Israelite indeed," was a native or inhabitant of Cana. He was convinced of the Messiahship of Jesus by the tokens of omniscience which the words of Jesus conveyed, and, pleased with the frankness of his faith, Jesus said, "Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig-tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man." Because I have read your thoughts, and revealed your secret resting-place beneath the fig-tree, you believe that I am the Son of God, the King of Israel, for whom you and your

compatriots are now looking. But soon shall you witness incidents more surprising. Heaven is about to open, and its angels will attend My bidding. A career of wonders is about to begin, which will shew you that the powers of a higher world surround My person, and that not only all knowledge but all might belongs to the Son of man.

Accordingly, three days after, at Cana of Galilee, Jesus made a commencement of His miracles, letting out His latent power; and in that first flush of opening heaven—in that manifestation of their Master's glory—the faith of His disciples was confirmed (John ii. 11). Of these disciples, Nathanael was one; and even if he had not gone to the marriage as one of the four or five disciples already attached to Jesus—and even if we do not suppose that it was Nathanael's own wedding, for the sake of which Jesus and his disciples had consented to tarry these three days in Cana—there can be little doubt that the good Israelite was present on an occasion sure to assemble all the notabilities of his native village, and that in the prodigy which astonished all the guests he saw the first instalment of the “greater things” which Christ had promised.*

* As there can be little doubt that Nathanael was present at this commencement of miracles, so we are expressly told that he was present at the miracle in which the mighty works of the Saviour were concluded (John xxi. 2). So amply was the promise fulfilled, “Thou shalt see greater things.”

Amongst the Jews a wedding was a joyous celebration, of which the festivities extended over many days, and, besides friends and acquaintances, the whole neighbourhood often came together. Whether on this occasion there was a greater concourse than their hosts had expected, at all events, as the feast proceeded, the mother of Jesus came to Him, and said, "They have no wine." The very fact of her resorting to Him shews that Mary had not forgotten the sayings which long ago she pondered in her heart, and that she felt no emergency could be so great but that means of extrication were in the power of her wonderful Son. Still His answer appeared rather a repulse than a compliance—"Woman, what is that to thee and Me?" 'We are not responsible for the supply of the banquet. Besides "mine hour is not yet come." You know that I have not yet commenced that course of miracles, one of which you now wish Me to perform.' There would, however, seem to have been something more encouraging in His aspect than in His words; for, as if thoroughly confident that He was about to interpose, Mary said to the attendants, "Whatever he desires be sure you do it." And He did interpose. At that period the Jews had carried to a finical extreme the ablutions of the Levitical Law; and before they would sit down to a meal, for fear they might have contracted some casual impurity, they had water poured over their hands. To provide a supply for such purposes

there were on this occasion, placed either in the banquet-room, or somewhere near hand, six great amphoræ or water-jars, and these Jesus bade the servants fill with water up to the brim. And as soon as they told Him that the vessels were filled, He bade them pour out a specimen, and carry it to the master of the ceremonies. As soon as he tasted this fresh supply, and perceived its exquisite aroma, he said to the bridegroom in whose house the banquet was given, "The usual way is to begin with good wine, and then come to the inferior quality ; but thou hast kept the good wine until now." But the miracle thus graciously wrought to relieve the embarrassment of their hospitable entertainers, not only filled the wedding guests with amazement, but, in conjunction with the Baptist's testimony, and the impressions of their own brief intercourse, was a mighty confirmation to the faith of Christ's disciples. In the power which willed water into wine they recognised a creative energy, and they saw that to the intuitions of the omniscient Heart-Searcher, their Master added the resistless volition which speaks and it is done.

It was a simple commencement—the simple commencement of a stupendous history. It was not such a commencement as human ostentation would have chosen : a rural hamlet, a village wedding, a house where the owners were too poor to provide for the guests. A few weeks previously there had been

offered to Him a nobler theatre—a theatre the grandest which the god of this world could select. He had stood on a pinnacle of the temple, in the very focus of the faithful, in the midst of Jerusalem, in the heart of the Holy Land; and as the worshippers poured into the populous courts, and as far beneath His feet He eyed spectators, who were themselves a spectacle—the men of mark, the priests and scribes, the scholars and the sages of the day, and that multitude who were daily expecting the advent of Messiah; it was suggested to Him, Cast thyself down hence, for His angels will up-bear thee. Surely that would have been a worthy commencement, a fit beginning of miracles,—from yonder dizzy turret to glide down on no other pinions than His own sustaining will, and astonish the assembled throng as if by a descent from the firmament. But dazzling as the demonstration would have been, the Saviour declined it; and the career which was to end in rending the rocks and raising the dead, in eclipsing the sun and in be-darkening a guilty land—that career commenced in the supernatural supply of a little wine to a few peasants at a village festival.

So truly Divine is simplicity. And like the King of heaven, all that is truly kingly, all that is heavenly, “comes not with observation.” That prodigy awoke no plaudits throughout Palestine; but it attracted august spectators. “Heaven” was “open,” and

in doing it, Immanuel was “seen of angels.” It astonished no philosopher, no emperor; it only confirmed the faith of a few fishermen who had become disciples already: and yet it was the first in that series of which the Redeemer’s resurrection and ascension were the last, and on whose firm foundation Christianity stands—the vast and ever-during fabric.

It is enough for the disciple to be as his Master. Up to that hour His time was not yet come; our time is always ready. There is not a career of wonders before us; but there is a career of well-doing. Jesus calls us to glory and virtue. He bids us receive and employ the grace of the Comforter. In His own name, and in the strength of His spirit, as sinners forgiven, and as affectionate followers of the forgiving Saviour, He summons us to His own high calling of God-glorifying, world-bettering beneficence. And, reader, for your outset seek no far-off nor arduous starting-point. You need ascend no pinnacle. You need go up to no Jerusalem. Let your Sabbath-class or your servants be your Cana; let your fireside or your tea-table, this evening, be like that banquet-room in Galilee, the beginning of your self-conquests, the commencement of a franker and truer Christianity, a mightier and more assiduous manifestation of your Master’s glory. Thus, too, will the water turn to wine. Thus will common life, brightening beneath the Saviour’s eye, begin to glow with a sacramental

richness and a heavenly radiance, and ordinary incidents and engagements will acquire a sacred relish, reminding you of the great Transformer. And better still: this beginning of discipleship will be the first step in a progressive piety—a Cana which will be followed by its own Gadara, and Bethany, and Olivet; and as you yourself see greater things than these—as your own faith confirms, and your own devotion deepens—and as you find in the growing consolations of the Holy Spirit, that the Bridegroom keeps His best to the last—the disciples whom your early fervour impressed, and whom your later faith confirmed, will feel that where the glory is Immanuel's, there are no bounds to the manifestation, and that where the water of ordinary life pours out the new wine of the kingdom, there is no risk that either goodness or comfort will ever run dry.

The miracles of Jesus have all a spiritual or ethical import. They were not isolated portents, unmeaning though surprising prodigies. They were “signs”—miracles wrought with a purpose, and revealing the mind of their Author. For example, in the case before us, which primarily illustrates the power of Jesus, and which is a striking attestation of His divine commission—when we look at the circumstances in which it is imbedded—when we inquire, What glimpses of Christ's heart, what intimations of Christ's plans and wishes does it yield? we think that we perceive

a certain light which it throws on the nature of Christ's kingdom, as a kingdom neither austere nor ascetic, and a further light which it throws on Christ's disposition, as full of delicate considerateness and Divine munificence.

John the Baptist came neither eating nor drinking. Most likely, the forerunner was never at such a feast; and with his matted locks and sun-burnt visage; with his leather belt and his hairy hyke; with his dish of locusts and his cup of cold water—to say nothing of stern, sequestered looks and unsocial habits—the second Elias, by his very presence, would have petrified the banquet into a stiff and silent ceremony. But Jesus of Nazareth was a man of another make and mien. Whilst in himself independent of all created joy, and whilst to the Lord of angels and to the Entertainer of worlds it was a deep condescension to become the guest of man; yet as the founder of the Christian system He fulfilled all righteousness, and He has left us an example that we should follow His steps. And as there was a danger lest in subsequent times men should misunderstand—as even then there were Essenes who held that perfection consists in abstaining from all the enjoyments of sense, “Touch not, taste not, handle not those things which perish in the using;” and as the Saviour foresaw that within His own Church men would arise forbidding to marry and commanding to abstain from meats which God

has created to be received with thanksgiving—the Son of man came eating and drinking. He made His entry on public life at a friendly festival, and pronounced “marriage honourable in all,” by working His first miracle to promote the enjoyment of a wedding company. And all through His public ministry He went on the same principle. Himself so holy and separate from sin, he cheerfully accepted the hospitalities to which he was invited; and not only as the guest of the pious Lazarus and the rigid Simeon, but by taking His disciples to dine with Levi and Zaccheus, to the great scandal of the Pharisees—He taught us, that separateness from sin is one thing, and separation from society another; that the pure religion which keeps us unspotted from the world is not the sanctimoniousness which, with a view to self-preservation, secludes itself, but the sanctity which still more effectually preserves itself in seeking its own diffusion.

The Saviour sought to make His disciples not non-human, but holy. He came not to alter human nature, but to restore it. He came to repair the devil’s destruction of man’s primitive constitution. By becoming flesh of our flesh, the Son of God became the Second Adam, and now the Head of every redeemed man in Christ. And, whilst the object of corrupted Christianity is to make us *imperfect angels*, the object of the Redeemer was to make us *perfect men*. There

was nothing ascetic, nothing monastic, in all His precepts or practice; and of all His natural goodness, of all the cures He wrought, and all the miraculous supplies He provided, as well as of all the innocent festivities which, by His presence, He sanctified, the great lesson was, that He had come not to destroy the flesh, but “to destroy sin in the flesh;” not to make His disciples fasters and flagellants, hermits and recluses, monks and nuns, but—what is far more difficult, and needs an exertion more Divine—to make them holy men and holy women, pious householders and God-fearing guests, good servants and good citizens—such sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty as were our first parents before they fell.

Far more difficult than the anchoret’s separation from the world is the Christian’s sojourn in it; and, though rare, it is beautiful to see those believers in whose behalf their Lord’s intercession has evidently been heard, and who, before they are taken finally out of the world, are “kept from the evil in it;” those men of single purpose who, “whether they eat, or drink, or whatsoever they do, do all to the glory of God.” And as social intercourse is so great a portion of most men’s existence, as the time which is not absorbed in business is more of it spent in seeing one another than in reading books or in meditation and prayer, surely the act of profitable intercourse is worth some study. And, without too much strait-

ening that simplicity, and unreserve, and excursive-ness, which are the great charm of the social circle—without converting every meeting of friends into a theological congress or a scientific re-union—might not a great deal be done to render our incidental gatherings feasts of reason, and feasts of religion too? Might not recreation be secured without altogether losing sight of intellectual and spiritual improvement? Must wit prove fatal to wisdom, and is it necessary that sense should cease where recreation begins? And should we not often return with a much happier sensation from the evening's intercourse, if conscious that we ourselves had contributed, or induced others to contribute, what was fitted to expand the intellect, or purify the taste, or hallow the affections of those with whom we came in contact?

More particularly by the occasion on which He wrought this miracle, Christ gave His sanction to the primeval ordinance of marriage. We must remember that we are now at the gate of Paradise re-opened. The Saviour is undoing the works of the devil, and is recovering for His people the forfeited Eden. The serpent has been bruised, the tempter has been foiled, and the path to the tree of life is again to be thrown open. And if there is to be any change, now is the time for announcing it. In the early Paradise it was not good for man to be alone; but if in the Christian Church it is good, now is the time for the

Church's Founder to declare it. But by that beginning of miracles the Son of God declared that He had not come to destroy domestic life, but to undo the devil's desecration of it, by restoring its sanctity and its happiness.

Lightly as it is often gone about, and joyless as it sometimes proves, like the Sabbath itself, this primitive institution still survives, a small but precious salvage from the world's great shipwreck, and, like the Sabbath, shewing how much the Creator's institutions can do to promote the creature's blessedness. Even where the knowledge of the true God was lost, this boon of His has in many cases lingered, and the wives of Pætus and Pliny, and the mother of the Gracchi, are witnesses how the sublimest and loveliest ingredients of our nature have been elicited, even among the heathen, by the right observance of a single relation. As coming nearer our own time, as neither withdrawn into the remoteness of antiquity, nor elevated into the rare and heroic grandeur of those who, like the wife of Grotius and Madame De Lavalette, were the means of rescuing their husbands from captivity ; or that more heroic instance still of a Livonian maid, whose betrothed was sentenced to banishment, but who married him in his prison that she might share his exile in Siberia :—as modern instances, and as good every-day illustrations of the last chapter of Proverbs, and all the better as coming

from a range of illustration external to Christian biography, we may quote the words of two distinguished lawyers and statesmen, who ascribed their eminence to helps meet for them. The first is Sir James Mackintosh, who thus writes of his:—"By the tender management of my weaknesses, she cured the worst of them. She became prudent from affection; and though of the most generous nature, she was taught economy and frugality by her love for me. She gently reclaimed me from dissipation; she propped my weak and irresolute nature; she urged my indolence to all the exertions that have been useful or creditable to me; and she was perpetually at hand to admonish my heedlessness and improvidence. To her I owe whatever I am; to her, whatever I shall be." And in a beautiful passage of one of his journals, Sir Samuel Romilly, taking a retrospect of twenty years which had been inspired by the society of "a most intelligent mind, a cheerful disposition, a noble and generous way of thinking, an elevation and heroism of character, and a warm and tender affection, such as are very rare," ascribes to that source mainly, not only the many and exquisite enjoyments of his life, but his extraordinary success in his profession.

To a relation so sacred, and which has developed some of the finest features of humanity, the Head of the Church has given His immediate approval and sanction; and happy are the contracting parties who

invite to the marriage that Divine Guest who graced the wedding in Galilee. Happy the wives whose lovely piety—not lecturing, not reprimanding or reproving—but whose meek and quiet spirit—whose silent persuasion—wins those husbands whom “the word” has failed to win. Happy the husbands who—loving their wives as Jesus loved the Church, with a benevolent and self-sacrificing affection, in order to sanctify it, in order to present it to Himself a glorious and spotless Church—convey along with their affection ennobling sentiments and lofty aspirations, and who impart the robustness of principle to that goodness which has softened their sternness, and around their sturdier virtues shed the charm of its own endearing gentleness. Happy those partners who, like Aquila and Priscilla, are united in the Lord, and who think and consult and labour together in the service of the same Saviour. Happy those who, like Zacharias and Elizabeth, walk in all the statutes and ordinances blameless, and who walk all the longer and all the better because they walk arm-in-arm.

Bethesda : A Remarkable Recovery.

NEAR the Sheep-gate at Jerusalem was a pool which the Most High had endowed with a miraculous virtue. At certain intervals—the evangelist does not say how often, whether it was daily, or weekly, or once a-year, nor does he say how long the pool had possessed this virtue, but at certain intervals—“an angel went down and troubled the waters; and after the water began to be agitated, whosoever was the first to step in was cured of his disease, whatever it might be.” There was mercy in the miracle, and Bethesda was one of the blessings, as well as one of the wonders of the Holy City. But the boon was restricted. It corresponded to that limited economy under which “salvation was of the Jews,” and when there were few indeed that were saved. The opportunity was of rare recurrence—perhaps confined to the Passover and other sacred festivals—and the sufferers who could benefit were only a few, and these not always the most urgent

cases. The paralysed, the lame, and the impotent were apt to be forestalled by sturdier patients, and the very persons whose case was the most deplorable were often unable to reach the pool till the virtue had vanished. In Bethesda God taught the Jews what He is daily teaching ourselves—that, in order to carry out His beneficent arrangements, human sympathy must second the Divine generosity. God sent the angel, and made Bethesda therapeutic; but unless the sound and the healthy assisted the halt and the powerless, Bethesda was troubled in vain. There is goodness enough in Creation and Providence to make all the men of England comfortable, contented, and happy; but unless the virtuous and well-conditioned put forth a helping hand, and assist their abject and ignorant neighbours, millions may perish on the brink of Bethesda. And there is life enough in the gospel, a vitalising virtue sufficient to heal all nations; and blessed be God! that gospel is a fountain whose angel is never absent—whose virtue never fails; but unless there be kind Christian hands to lift the lethargic dreamers who bestrew the brink, and to help forward the frail and tottering steps which can hardly find the way, a multitude of impotent folk, halt, and withered, may die amidst the means of salvation.

Round Bethesda five porticoes or piazzas had been erected, most likely to shelter from the weather the waiting invalids. In one of these porticoes, as He

passed on a certain Sabbath, Jesus saw a poor patient lying. He was advanced in years, and it turned out that he had laboured under his malady to the full extent of an ordinary human life—no less than eight and thirty years. As there he lay on his mat, with his pain-worn features, he moved the pity of the Man of Mercies. In answer to Christ's inquiry, "Wilt thou be made whole?" it appeared that it was from no want of anxiety or exertion on his own part that he continued a sufferer so long. He had tried it often; but he was too poor to pay for an attendant, and when the propitious moment arrived, before he could crawl to the verge, some sturdier expectant vaulted in and carried off the cure. Knowing the story to be true, Jesus eyed him with that mingled look of power and compassion which created faith wherever it alighted, and said, "Rise, take up thy bed, and walk." Never doubting, never remonstrating, asking no question, and interposing no difficulty, the man instantly arose, and rolling up the mat, laid it on his shoulder, and walked away. "What! carrying a burden on the Sabbath-day!" exclaimed the infuriated spectators; and to appease their outraged zeal, the poor man pleaded the command of his merciful Restorer. But fanaticism would not be content with such an apology. "Where is the man"—not, Where is the man who has so wonderfully cured you? but—"Where is the man who said unto thee, 'Take up thy bed and

walk?" But Jesus was no longer there ; and it was not till a later hour that the convalescent was able to point out his Benefactor. Jesus found him in the temple; and, whilst his heart was still soft with recent obligation, said, "Go, and sin no more, lest a worse thing befall thee." Feeling it needful to his own vindication, and hoping, perhaps, that the hostility of the Pharisees would be disarmed when they knew who had wrought the wonder, the man told them it was Jesus. "Therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay him, because he had done these things on the Sabbath-day."

"An infirmity thirty and eight years!" How the soul of the sufferer would have sunk could any one have foretold, when his disease was only commencing, how long it was to last! Young man, you have sinned, and this evil has befallen you. And it will not soon go away. The physician is not yet born into the world who can cure you. You say, The pain is terrible to bear; but you must bear it eight and thirty years. The present generation will be gone, and your own head will be gray, before you know again what it is to have an hour of health and soundness. But this fearful foreknowledge was mercifully withheld, and scope was left for that happy instinct which is a relic of the innocent era in the history of our race, and closely connected with man's

instinct of immortality. The sufferer had room for hope. He felt it worth while to try the remedies. Morning by morning he could creep to Bethesda; and though so often tantalised and disappointed, he could trust that the next turn would be more propitious; and how could he tell but that this day was the set time for favour, and after being so often baulked and baffled, what if this were the blessed day which should end his misery, and send him back to his fellows a restored and joyful convalescent!

Better, however, than the most sanguine expectation of a cure, is the sanctified use of sickness. God has different ways of making His children holy; but with many it is His plan to make them perfect through sufferings. Says Baxter, in his note on this passage, "How great a mercy was it to live thirty-eight years under God's wholesome discipline! O my God, I thank Thee for the like discipline of fifty-eight years; how safe is this in comparison of full prosperity and pleasure."* And in a similar spirit has it been sung by one who was an invalid as many years as this poor man was impotent:—

“ Had but the prison walls been strong,
And firm without a flaw,
In darkness faith had dwelt too long,
And less of glory saw.

* Quoted by Blunt, vol. i., p. 96.

But now the everlasting hills
 Through ev'ry chink appear,
 And something of the joy she feels,
 While yet a pris'ner here !

The shines of heaven rush sweetly in
 At all the gaping flaws,
 Visions of endless bless are seen,
 And native air she draws." *

To the praise of the glory of His grace who perfects strength in weakness, be it known that there is no ailment so protracted, nor any paroxysm so overwhelming, but that even as the suffering abounds the consolation can also abound. As one expressed it, who was subject to manifold tribulations, "The promise, 'As thy days, so shall thy strength be,' has been so fulfilled that I could feel strength given my soul each moment to bear up against the exhaustion of my body." † And another, who for thirty-seven years was "gold tried in the fire," "I experience so much of the Saviour's love in supporting me under pain, that I cannot fear its increase." ‡ And we often recall what was once told us by a sainted friend whose parish was the Grassmarket of Edinburgh—that when wearied and sickened with the scenes of depravity which he constantly encountered, before returning home for the day he often went to refresh his spirit in a garret where a poor woman was slowly

* Watts' "Lyrics."

† "Memorials of Two Sisters," p. 220.

‡ "Harriet Stoneman," p. 149.

dying of a cancer. But so much of Heaven had come down to that little chamber, that just as in the peace of God the sufferer triumphed over nature's agony, so in sharing her wonderful happiness the man of God forgot the wickedness with which his soul had been vexed all day, as he also forgot the deplorable misery of the tenement in which this bea-tified spirit still lingered. Glad and glorious infirmity which secures the Saviour's presence, and is sustained in the Saviour's power!

When this poor man was restored, he went to the temple; and it was there that Jesus next found him. Perhaps it was long since he had been there before; and at all events it was a good sign that he found his way thither so soon. Doubtless, he went in the fulness of his heart, as well as in the first use of his renovated members; and most likely he had taken his thank-offering with him.

Meanwhile, let those of us who are able to frequent the house of God not forget "the assembling of ourselves together." Reader, the day must shortly arrive—to some perhaps it has arrived already—when you shall have worshipped your last in the great congregation. And when that Sabbath comes on which you can go thither no longer—when in their Sunday's attire the rest of the household have quitted you, and the bells have fallen silent, and from some neighbouring sanctuary the organic swell or voice o

psalms has announced the commencement of the worship, and you know that all the Christianity of the kingdom is now assembled for social prayer and praise—may you not wish that in days of vigour you had been a more attentive listener and a more earnest worshipper? May you not wish that so long as you had a sound and painless head you had thrown more fervour into the public prayer—and whilst your voice was firm and clear, that you had contributed a part more cordial and inspiring to the psalmody? May you not wish that when your faculties were fresh, and before the grasshopper grew burdensome, you had hearkened more alertly to the words of life, and taken home more personally and practically the truth as it is in Jesus? And amidst all the motives to strenuous devotion and earnest hearing, would it not be well to bear in mind such days of darkness, and now be laying up a good foundation against the time to come? Would it not be well in imagination to change places sometimes with the mournful prisoner whose pew is this day vacant, or with the joyful convalescent who regards it as the crowning mercy in his restoration that once more it is said, “Go into the house of the Lord?”

The Son of man is Lord of the Sabbath, and as the great Legislator, and Governor of the Church, Jesus interpreted the law of the Sabbath. Under the old economy, the main stress had been laid on the

negative or prohibitory side of the Sabbatic command: "Thou shalt do no manner of work: Thou shalt bear no burden on the Sabbath-day;" and with the stricter Jews, he was the best Sabbath-observer who not only abstained from his ordinary employments, but who maintained the largest amount of general inaction. But the Lord Jesus "fulfilled" the command. By not merely attending the synagogue, but by curing diseases, by caring for the comfort of those around him, by speaking words in season, by filling up the hours with profitable discourse and benevolent deeds—He shewed that the Sabbath was not intended to be a day of grim looks, sealed lips, and folded hands, but a day of "delight"—a day of active beneficence as well as cheerful devotion. He took from it that merely negative or prohibitory aspect with which Judaism had clothed it, and restored the Paradisaic institution in all its kindness of design and with its fulness of blessing. Sabbath-keeping, according to the Jews, consisted in doing nothing; according to Jesus, it consisted in "doing good." And as it was on a Sabbath-day that He first encountered this poor invalid, on the great principle that mercy is the best form of sacrifice, the Lord Jesus healed him at once; and on the same principle He bade him fold up his couch and carry it home. A Pharisee would rather that he had lain a

night without a bed, or that he had left it behind at the risk of having it stolen: just as that Pharisee would have thought it a duty to leave the sufferer in pain till the morrow. And whilst the very genius of the institution requires the suspension of secular employ, and whilst we are far from undervaluing the bodily repose and mental renovation which the Sabbath brings, we believe that the man spends his Sabbaths best, and best commemorates the Lord of the Christian Sabbath, who is busiest in doing good. Nor are there many better ways of filling up the hours which are not employed in worship, public or private, than with those works of mercy and ministrations to the sick and afflicted of which the Saviour set examples so significant. Not only is there the Bethesda—the hospital into whose focus disease and misery are collected—but there is many a solitary sufferer, many a bereaved or destitute family, to which, with the Bible in his hand and the love of the Saviour in his heart, the benevolent Christian might pay a friendly visit; and whilst his own spirit is quickened by all the influences of the hallowed season, and whilst theirs is solemnised by the events of Providence, not only may it be his happiness to introduce the Great Physician and the Mourner's Friend, but over the remainder of the day will spread a softer light and an intenser sacredness. Not the less “the

holy of the Lord and honourable" for being bestowed on labours of love: there is no day so delightful as the day that is useful; and no week is likely to pass so serenely as the week whose first day was doubly hallowed by devotion and beneficence.

Nain: The Interrupted Funeral.

IT was a summer day, and it was a lovely region. Along with His newly appointed attendants, the twelve Apostles, Christ had accomplished a considerable journey from Capernaum. They had reached the edge of that noble corn-field, the golden plain of Jezreel; and above them towered the copsy pyramid of Tabor—the leafiest hill in all the Holy Land. Jesus was well acquainted with the neighbourhood; for Narazeth was only a few miles distant, and perhaps He was even now renewing acquaintance with spots where, in the obscure bygone days, He had held blessed intercourse with His Father in heaven. The travellers had nearly reached a little hamlet, and were just making for the entrance, when they heard bitter cries, and knew at once that a funeral was approaching. Forthwith it issued from the gate. There was no coffin; but, wrapped in a linen shroud, all except the face, lay the body, and two bearers were carrying it along on a bier. The face was un-

covered. It was the smooth forehead and sun-burnt countenance of a young man. The whole village came after. Some had torn their clothes, as a sign of their sorrow, and many were raising from time to time a melancholy wail : but by far the most affecting sight was the chief mourner. She was the dead man's mother : and she was all alone in her sorrow. She had neither son, nor daughter, nor husband with her : for in yonder sepulchre she had already laid her husband, and on this bier now lay her only child. A pang of tenderness at once went through the Saviour's bosom— a prophetic pang—for perhaps He thought of another widow who would feel like anguish at another funeral, when they would be burying “the only son” of His own mother. “When the Lord saw her he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not.” And putting his hand on the bier, there was something in His aspect so majestic that the bearers instantly placed it on the ground ; and as the procession was arrested and the shrieks of the mourners were suspended in astonishment, Jesus said—“Young man, I say unto thee, arise.” The word was as awakening as the archangel's trumpet ; for instantly he that was dead sat up : and like a man roused from a deep sleep, and whose apartment has filled with visitors during his slumber, opening his eyes he began to ask where he was. But—as if to shew that the acknowledgment which He sought

was a life of filial devotedness—Jesus delivered him to his mother ; and, amazed at the miracle, the retinue of the Saviour and the villagers, no longer mourners, joined in exclaiming, “ God hath visited his people : a great prophet is risen.”

1. Death is the great destroyer of happiness. It may have chanced to you to be visiting some beautiful domain, and when you had viewed the garden with its porticoes and terraces, and had lain for a while watching the antlered deer as they browsed beneath the oaks of the far-stretching park, you could almost have envied the possessor of this paradise—when there broke on your ear the solitary toll of a church bell, and then another, and another : and looking up you saw issuing from the mansion and wending down the avenue a plumed and sable pomp, and you learned that the lord of the manor was carrying to the ancestral vault the coffin of his son and heir. Yes : it is all as beautiful as ever. You can see no cloud blot the sky. You perceive that the fountains still play, and the flowers still blossom, and the stag still crops the herbage : but if that chief mourner should notice them at all, they have lost all their lifeness and loveliness to him. He himself still lives, and he is still the lord of this domain : but to him the landscape has died—the glory has departed. There is crape upon the lawn ; a sepulchral odour is wafted

from the geraniums and roses ; the knell from the steeple is repeated by the lark in the firmament and the cicada in the sod ; the sunshine is cruel, and the sweet season is a mockery : and he hates those steeds so jet and glossy, which pace along so proudly, and carry in the nodding hearse the hope of an ancient house, and the joy of the rich senator's old age. So with this Hebrew matron. There was hardly a sweeter hamlet in all the Holy Land. There was no spot where the crops grew ranker or richer—none where more of peace and plenty smiled. And she fancied that she had once enjoyed it all ; and what enjoyment she had was more than doubled by the society of another, whose kind word was ample compensation for many an hour's hard toil—whose faintest smile would have made fair weather in the wildest winter day. But he had died, and he was buried : and what all besides was buried in his grave it is impossible to tell—so many pleasant schemes, so many fond domestic projects ; yes, the fairest part of existence was buried there, for *there* was buried all the future. But something still was left ; and coming back to her cottage she did not weep alone, for her boy, in his own childish way, would lay his head on her bosom and cry, because his father would come back no more. As she rose in the sleepless night, and in the moonlight bent over his cot, many a time she blessed God for her treasure, and prayed that he might live for ever.

And then as he roughened into sturdier life, at his deeper tones she sometimes started as if at the return of a dear voice ; and at his wayward speeches and wilful doings she was not utterly displeased, for they reminded her of his father's ways. But that was all over now. There was no one to protect her from the people who devour widows' houses—no one to say to the desolate mourner, "Weep not." And so the cottage might be as comfortable as ever—the village might to-morrow put on its bright and busy face again—the balmy summer might float from the cool lake of Galilee to the ripe acres of Jezreel ; but there was one heart which was likely to pass through the midst of it as dark as night, as dead as the sea-side stone.

And so to all of us death is the great damper. From many he has taken away the desire of their eyes, and though the world is still full of interesting objects, they feel as if they could never be enthusiastic any more. And others he fills with continual forebodings. When they are cheerful, and just beginning to be happy, they fetch a deep sigh and relapse into pensiveness ; for they remember, that pleasant as this present is, by reason of death it cannot continue. And always suspecting a snake in the grass, poison in the cup ; always, with bated breath and beating heart, listening to the rustle of the curtain, and expecting the assassin's footstep on

the floor, this king of terrors contrives to hold them in bondage all their days. And you are ready to regret the long measure meted to the old-world fathers. You say, If I may not live always, I wish I might live as long as Adam or Methuselah. I wish we had a thousand years to come and go upon. To have all our active, zestful, enjoyable existence condensed into twenty or thirty years ; in less than that time to be left a widower or a widow ; to follow to the grave the child who should have long survived us ; to be scarcely ever out of mourning ; and, what is even a pain more exquisite, to be hardly ever that you are not solicitous for some beloved object—tremulously watching the ebb and flow of strength, the flushing and the fading of the countenance ;—what matters it that this little islet of existence has many a pleasant nook, when such a flood of sorrow on every side flows round it ?

2. But if Death be the great destroyer of happiness, Jesus is the destroyer of Death. At His majestic movement the bearers instinctively stood still ; but it was not in that procession only that a mysterious Power and Presence were recognised ; the voice which said, “ Young man, arise,” was heard as clearly in the invisible world as it was amidst that funeral company ; and it was because a disembodied spirit heard that voice, and at once obeyed it, that where a dead corpse lay last moment there now leaped up a living

man. To human observation it was only a common traveller who had arrived along the dusty road ; but that traveller was " the Resurrection and the Life," carrying at his girdle the keys of Death and Hades ; and to Him it was as easy to recall to its forsaken tenement the departed soul, as it would have been to expel from that frame a disease or a demon. Obedient to His omnipotent behest, the spirit came again ; the deep sob, the heaving chest, the expanding features, the disparting lips, the flashing eye, proclaimed the presence of the Prince of Life ; and a transported mother and an awe-struck multitude announced the miracle complete.

How the dead will rise, and with what bodies they will come, we cannot tell ; but this we know, that of all the souls which have passed away from their mortal shrines to the world of spirits, there is not one extinct, but that all in their own places are awaiting the hour when the voice of Jesus will again unite them to a materialism which each shall recognise as his corporeal companion, the former inlet of all his knowledge, and the familiar instrument of all his doings, good or evil. " All that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and shall come forth ; they that have done good, to the resurrection of life ; they that have done evil, to the resurrection of damnation."

And in the meanwhile, there is a resurrection which

Jesus is effecting every day. Constantly does it happen that some soul dead in trespasses is quickened into a life of holy blessedness. There is a young man whose soul is dead. There is not in him one spark of the life of God. Like the young Galilean carried out by his sorrowing companions, he is "past feeling," and incapable of all vital action. Like the sweet landscape which was utterly lost on those sealed senses, all the precious promises, the beauties of holiness, the bright prospects of heaven, the fragrant name of Jesus, spread on every side ; but this dead soul inhales nothing—this dead soul sees nothing. Like the grave-clothes that bound him, like the tomb with its stone portal which was soon to imprison him, this dead soul is tied and bound with the chain of sin, and is buried in the grave of its ungodliness ; but it neither rebels at the fetters nor resents the weight of the tomb-stone. And like the unconscious clay which felt no sympathy with the weeping mother—which little surmised what sorrow its own deadness caused—and which needed to live again before it knew how much it was regretted, and how dearly it was loved—the soul dead in trespasses never dreams of that Father of spirits who bends over him a pitying eye, and who, were he now resuscitated, would exclaim, "Rejoice, for this, my son, was dead, and is alive again !" But the Saviour speaks the word. By some startling utterance or arresting Providence He stops the march of death—

He interrupts the sad journey to the gulf of souls. "Young man, I say unto thee, arise." Yes, Jesus says it—Young man, rise. The soul is quickened. Sensation comes. Sin is felt. Its bond is burst. Perception comes. Holiness is seen to be beautiful exceedingly, and the character of God most majestic and most lovely. Vital action comes. Behold he prays. Behold he looks to Jesus. Hark, "he begins to speak!" He is confessing Christ before men. He is telling these young scholars about their Saviour and their souls. He is trying to prepossess for the gospel his companions and his kindred. He is ready to forsake his home, or to return and gladden it, precisely as Christ would have him do.

Where the soul is thus made living, death is effectually destroyed; for he who thus believes in Jesus shall never die. Like the primitive Church, who called the martyr's first day in heaven his birthday, and always celebrated its return in bright apparel—if there were a family or a community, every member of which could shew his title "to a mansion in the skies"—how altered would be death's aspect!—how softened the pang of parting!—how lightened the gloom of the funeral day! Then, instead of feeling ourselves like so many captives carried off by the inexorable corsair, and sent all apart to dissevered and far-distant shores, we should feel like exiles going home—like emigrants returning to their father-land;

and though not permitted to return all in the same ship, yet well assured that, bound for the same port, we shall, ere long, meet in the same Father's house.

3. Observe how Jesus disposed of the resuscitated youth. It would have been natural to say, "Follow thou me." It would have been fit and proper that Jesus should have carried in His retinue this trophy of His power; and that wherever He had gone He should have been attended by this living miracle. Nor could either the young man or his mother have grudged to their Benefactor such a sacrifice. But it was pity which prompted the interposition at first, and a generosity as graceful as it was gracious consummated this deed of mercy. "Moved with compassion," Jesus had said, "Young man, arise;" and now that he who was dead had returned to life, Jesus "delivered him to his mother." We can little doubt that both mother and son were henceforth grateful disciples; but the form in which the Saviour desired that the young man should exhibit his gratitude was dutiful devotedness to a widowed parent. And if he had been—as we may hope—an exemplary son before, surely now when he recalled the ministrations of his own last illness; when he recollected who it was that tended him so carefully, and prepared each cordial so thoughtfully; when he remembered who it was that wiped his damp brow, and fanned the hot air, and kissed his

parched lips so fondly, and, stifling her emotion, only let out the wildness of her grief when she fancied that it could no longer disturb his sealed senses; and when he thought of that recognition so resurrection-like, and of the Saviour's virtual charge, "Woman, behold thy son: Man, behold thy mother;" surely there would be a tenderness of attachment, and a minuteness of forethought, and a self-denial and self-sacrifice, in the home-life of that son, worthy of his wonderful history; and the man who, instead of preaching the Gospel, received it as a charge from his Saviour to cherish his mother, would surely be a paragon of filial piety.

There is no one in this world who has stronger claims on all that is holy in sympathy, and all that is delicate in kindness, than one who is "a widow indeed;" and from the very fact, that till now she has had all the heavier cares carried, and all the rougher work done for her by another, she is often more helpless and forlorn than those who have fought life's battle single-handed. And as the time when the stroke of God has fallen heaviest on the home—as that is the time which brings the vultures together—as it is the time when accounts already discharged are sent in to be paid a second time, when sleeping law-suits are revived, when demands the most exorbitant are made on one whose broken heart can offer no resistance, and whose very tears invite them to

take all: oh! it is a noble sight when, foregoing the frivolities of youth, and exhibiting a wisdom and energy beyond his years, the boy becomes the man of business, and the father's son steps forth as the mother's champion, and drives off the ghouls who threatened to devour the widow's house. Happy omen for the subsequent career of such high-hearted sons of youth, and for the comfort and honour of their own subsequent relations! Happy earnest that He who has annexed the first promise to the fifth command, and who, at Sarepta and at Nain, restored to life a widow's only son, will not forget this work of filial love! Happy household where, as with "the mother of the Gracchi," the family history includes a tale of filial heroism and maternal recompense!

Perhaps there may fall on these pages the eye of some youthful reader who has lately learned to love the Saviour; and you are asking, What shall I render? What is there I can do to shew my gratitude to Him who gave Himself for me? And possibly you have thought of some great or arduous thing—the ministry, a mission, the visitation of a district, the inauguration of a ragged school. Perhaps it may be His will that you should eventually embark in this; but, in the meanwhile, whether as a preparation for ulterior work, or as your life's entire bestowment, it is His will that you "shew piety at home." You love your parents; let them know it.

Give them your confidence; give them your society. Think occasionally of these two things—of what they have already done for you, and of what you now may do for them. You sometimes make them little presents. Good; but remember what the gift is for which a parent's soul most yearns: "My son, give me thine heart." However much you may be taken up with more youthful associates, let them feel that every day, as your understanding expands, and your character confirms, you love them more and more. And should the shewing of that love involve some self-denial; should depression of spirits, should peculiarities of temper, should dim sight or dull hearing, should manifold infirmities or protracted feebleness impart a task-like complexion to the labour of love—behold in this a gauge of principle, a test of loyalty to your Lord in heaven. Here is your present mission; here is your immediate ministry; here is the best preparation for ulterior service, should such await you; nor need regrets surround the closing hour though life should end without a higher calling.

Dead, dead! that arm which steer'd the skiff
Through Galilee's white surf;
Lead, lead! that foot which chased the deer
O'er Tabor's bounding turf.

Beneath the rock the shepherd sings,
The turtle 's in the tree ;
But neither song nor summer greets
The silent land and thee.

March, march ! the pale procession swings,
With measur'd tramp and tread ;
Wo, wo ! yon gaping sepulchre
Is calling for the dead.

And bitter is the wail that weeps
The widow's only joy,
And vows to lean her broken heart
Beside her gallant boy.

Halt, halt ! a hand is on the bier,
And life stirs in the shroud ;
Rise, rise ! and view the Man Divine
Who wakes thee 'midst the crowd.

And as the mother clasps her son
In awe-struck ecstasy,
Turn thou thine eyes to Him whose word
Is immortality.

Home, home ! to make that mother glad,
And recompense her tears ;
Home, home ! to give that Saviour-God
This second lease of years.

And when amidst a greater crowd
Thou hear'st that voice again
May rising saints see Jesus in
The widow's son of Nain.

Gadara : The Demons Expelled.

EASTWARD of the Lake of Galilee lies the country which was allotted to Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh. In the days of our Saviour it was inhabited by people still more degenerate, less religious, and less respectable than the Galileans themselves. From Tiberias, and the other towns on the western margin of the lake, its hills and villages looked very near; but Jesus had never visited them. However, as one region where lost sheep of the house of Israel might be looked for, it was fit that the Good Shepherd should go to this unattractive country. Accordingly, at the close of a day, when He had spoken many parables, He said to His disciples, "Let us pass over unto the other side." With no further preparation, they loosed from the shore and launched out into the deep. Fatigued with His laborious day, the Lord Jesus fell asleep. Amidst the darkness there came whirling down the opposite ravines a violent gust of wind, and as it swept the white spray before it, it smote the little craft so fiercely as

almost to capsize it. But although the vessel plunged so wildly, and although the waves were dashing in, the Divine Passenger slept on. It almost seemed as if "the Prince of the power of the air" was seeking to beat back from his coast a dreaded invader; and in sublime security the Heavenly Voyager disdained to be disturbed. But though the war of elements has no power to disturb the Son of God, the cry of extremity, the wail of anguish instantly arouses Him. "Master, carest thou not that we perish?" And although ignorance and unbelief mingled with that cry, there was generosity sufficient in Jesus to attend on the instant, and before He reproved the disciples He rebuked the wind, "Peace, be still;" and instantly the drenched boatmen were skimming over a glassy sea to a near-hand landing-place.

Yet, storms in the atmosphere are only material symbols of the wilder tempests in the mind of man. Up among the cliffs that overhang the lake, and in one of the cave-like tombs into which they are hollowed, two demoniacs had been sleeping. The loud wind awoke them, and hieing forth into the blast, they capered and shouted in chorus with the hurricane; and as the gray morning showed a vessel making for the shore, the impulse of mischief bore them off to meet it. One of them was so much more remarkable than the other, that Mark and Luke notice him only. He was a strong and muscular

man, of whom the other was only the shadowy satellite. Though he had been frequently caught and confined with fetters, such a fury would sometimes inspire him, that he would pull the staple from the wall, or snap the chain in sunder, and beating down the door, with wild laughter would he burst through the streets, and bound off to the wilderness again. So notorious were his strength and ferocity, that, to avoid his haunts, passengers were fain to make a long detour, and it was only by banding together that the swineherds felt safe in his neighbourhood. And now, as in the doubtful dayspring, he came careering along, followed by his obscurer companion, huzzahing, and howling, and clanking on the rocks his broken fetters, the sight was very terrible; and from his blood-stained arms and flashing eyes, the disciples would gladly have retreated into the shelter of their ship. But Jesus went forward to meet him; and as soon as He was near enough, the demoniac fell prostrate, and exclaimed, "What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God? I conjure thee that thou torment me not." At a distance, the hope of mischief had urged the demons to the shore; but nearer hand they recognised more than a mortal man, and knowing now who the Stranger was, they besought the Son of God to let them alone. Pitying their victim, Jesus asked his name; and the answer was, half maniac, half demoniac, "Legion :

for we are many." And perceiving the Saviour's purpose, the demons begged that He would not send them out of that country, or order them back into their own abyss. "If thou cast us out, send us into these swine." And instantly the whole herd ran violently over a precipice, and, being drowned in the lake, we may infer that the demons were cast out of that country, and sent back to the dreaded "deep," whence they came.

But the villagers, whom the tidings soon collected, were filled with a twofold emotion. They were greatly amazed at the change on the hapless demoniac. There he was, full of gratitude, sitting at the feet of his Deliverer, decently attired, and calm reason looking forth from those eyes which so long had glared with frenzy. He whom the brawniest wight among them would not have dared to face in single combat, and so savage that his name was a bugbear to all the district—so mild and gentle now that yonder mother would not fear to place her infant in his arms. How marvellous ! how delightful ! If they could only persuade this mighty Benefactor to tarry ! If He would only take a liking for their country, or divide the year betwixt themselves and Galilee, there was no mansion in all Perea which should not be at the disposal of such an illustrious guest, and theirs would be a happy land that boasted the powerful Presence which winds and seas obey, and which "devils fear

and fly." But the swine! the two thousand swine! half the wealth of Gadara! True, they ought not to have had them. They were renegades in feeding them. They felt that they could not upbraid this prophet for destroying them, and the manner of their destruction was a significant intimation, that the devil at last will claim his own, and that wealth borrowed from below will sooner or later return to the abyss. 'Still, property is property, and why should old Mosaic laws obstruct the trade of Gadara? Doubtless, to us it is forbidden food; but why should not Gadarenes feed swine, and accept in exchange silver sesterces from Roman soldiers?' And just in the same way as many a one would receive the Lord Jesus as a simple Pardoner, but takes alarm the moment he finds this Pardoner is also a Saviour; as many a one would make the Lord Jesus welcome, if He would only say, "Thy sins be forgiven thee;" but looks blank when he hears it added, "Go, and sin no more, lest a worse thing befall thee;" as many a one at this moment would feel it his impulse to receive Christ under his roof, but would change his mind the instant he found that on the arrival of this guest, all money made by gambling, or betting, or smuggling, took wing, and every article purchased from unpaid creditors walked away; as many a one who would have accepted the gospel alongside of one favourite iniquity, when it comes to the alternative, keeps the

sin, and sends away the Saviour: so these Gadarenes were so grieved at the loss of the swine, that, even although it should risk the return of the demons, they besought the Lord Jesus to depart out of their coasts.

It is impossible to read this narrative without deep compassion for the wretched sufferer, and without feeling thankful that Satan is so bound that he and his angels can thus afflict mankind no more. Much has been written on the pathology, or perhaps we should rather say on the psychology, of these demoniacal possessions—to which we have nothing to add, and which it would take too long to expound. We shall, therefore, conclude with the moral lesson deducible from the case of this unhappy man: for we think that such a lesson it was fitted and intended to convey.

Amongst this peculiar people—a people whose education was mainly carried on by types and symbols—among this people there existed a disease so singular that you are apt to fancy it must have been created mainly for the sake of its symbolic instruction. Than leprosy, as it existed among the Jews—and among them it would seem to have been in many respects different from any disease now known—than this dire malady there could be no more expressive emblem of sin in all its loathsomeness and contagiousness and deadliness. And whether creating it on purpose or finding it already in existence, the Divine

Lawgiver adopted this malady as the basis of a solemn and significant instruction, and in the Law of the Leper Jehovah wrote, most fully and most fearfully, the Natural History of Sin.

And though there is no code or commandment on the subject of demoniacs, is it a fancy altogether gratuitous or groundless to suppose that this remarkable visitation had also its religious lesson — its spiritual significance? Without insinuating that the sufferers were sinners above all that dwelt in the Holy Land, was not the infliction at once and inevitably suggestive of sin? And without saying that other ailments, corporeal and mental, were not often associated with it, could there be any calamity in itself more dismal and appalling? Was it not a solemn warning that the man who by sin makes himself Satan's vassal may soon be his victim, and that he who plays with the tempter may soon be possessed by the devil? Above all, if the disease already mentioned were an image of sin's loathsomeness and contagiousness, what could be imagined more striking than the case before us as a picture of sin's madness and misery?

For what was this man's case? He had an identity—a personality, quite distinct from the demon who possessed him. He had a will, and the demon had a will; but the stronger will overbore the weaker one, and he was sometimes led along a helpless but

not utterly unconscious captive. At other times we may suppose that the fury with which he was hurried along drove him distracted, and left him a mere blind tool in the hand of his demon master.

What an emblem of a sinful passion ! A man has learned to gamble. By betting at the races, or by playing games of chance, he won a few pounds like magic ; and though he lost them again, he learned to love the excitement and the luck, and ere ever he was aware, he had become an inveterate gamester. But debt and the danger of disgrace sobered him. He saw that he was playing the fool, and he resolved to stop. It was very hard, but still he was so far master of himself that he succeeded. For months he never earned an idle penny, and he never lost one. But on a bright day of May he was enticed away to Epsom, and he was tempted by the enormous odds. Or he wandered into the billiard-room, and they played so badly—he could do it so much better—he took up the stick and he laid down his money, and he was growing rich as a banker, when the caprice of an ivory ball left him a beggar. Or a man has learned to tipple. Drink is his demon. He knows it : he laments it : he condemns it : he curses it : but he cannot get rid of it. Like the stag on whose shoulders the lurking leopard has dropped from the tree, he is bestrid by a rider who is lapping his life's blood, and whose clutch will not relax whether his

victim seek the field or the forest. And though, when he adverts to his flagging strength and his faltering hand—though when he looks at his wife and his children, and thinks what he is doing, he execrates his frenzy, yet still he dearly loves his foe: and next pay-night he feels a sudden thirst—the contest of a weaker and a stronger will—the desire to be sober and the determination to drink—the wish to be temperate and the passion to tipples: till yielding to the stronger than he, he loses self-mastery, and comes home a howling demoniac, exceeding fierce, and a terror to all that come in his way.

And do we not see a further emblem of sin in this man's shocking abode and shameless habits? The clothing that was given him he tore to tatters, and rather than remain in his own comfortable home, he chose to dwell amidst the corruption and putrid effluvia of the sepulchre. And although the cases are not so common where, with Byronic effrontery, men glory in their shame, where they boast how bad they are, and repeat with triumph their exploits of infamy; yet in the case of almost all possessed with the devil there is the same predilection for the charnel-house—the same propensity for corrupt and corrupting society. Why is it that he loves such low company? Why is it that instead of the excellent of the earth he seeks out coarse and sottish acquaintances—men with the very sight of whom you feel disgusted? Why should

he prefer that crew of villains to the pure affections and home-stead delights which invite him to his own fire-side? For the same reason that to his own cottage the demoniac preferred a tomb. He is not himself. He is the slave of some lust or passion, and is led captive by it at its will. That tyrant lust, that master-passion, cannot live in a holy atmosphere; and therefore it hurries its victim away to the foul scenes and rank atmosphere which constitute its vital air.

We may believe, however, that it was with this man as with many in the like condition. Indeed, some circumstances would indicate as much; namely, that now and then he caught a glimpse of his actual state, and his darkened mind was visited by glimmerings of remorse and regret. As he sat in his cave, beneath the moonlight, and watched the great bats fluttering out and in, or heard a hyæna sniffing and cranching among the bones of the dead; as he viewed the furniture of his strange abode—the torn shrouds and the orbless skulls piled here and there—he marvelled what had brought him to that Golgotha. “I will arise, and go unto mine house;” and for awhile he almost thanked the friendly force which manacled his hands and reft him of the power of mischief. Yet even there he was not at home. The house was swept and garnished, but the demoniac’s mind was empty. No good angel had taken up his residence, and seven devils entering in hurried

him off to his old scenes, and made his latter end worse than the first. And any one who is the victim of a sinful passion, can easily recal visitations of horror and fits of reform. You were disgusted at yourself. You felt more foolish—more brutish than any man; you were a beast—a madman in your own eyes—and you vowed that at any hazard you would begin a better life; you would have even thanked, as a welcome violence, any one who would have bound you with chains, so as to keep you back from your besetting sin. And you laid bands on yourself. You made promises and resolutions. You told the entire case to some friend and begged that he would help you, that he would watch you and warn you; and yet again you fell. You played the fool as formerly. You were mad at yourself. Like Legion cutting himself with stones, you could almost kill yourself. You punished yourself by all sorts of penances. You would eat no pleasant bread. You almost envied the austerities, the privations, and the prisons of the Papist. But the unclean spirit had regained possession; you were presently as besotted as ever; and the Bacchanalian ditty or the demoniac laugh, startling the peaceful night, announced that Legion was gone back to the tombs.

Yes, hapless man, these sinful passions are exceedingly fierce. But though no man can bind them; nay, though oftentimes bound with chains, they will break

the fetters; though no man can bind them, Jesus can expel them. Entreat His pity. Cast yourself under His protection. Not only do the storms and winds obey Him, but the very devils are subject to Him. Fling yourself at His feet, and implore His compassion. Not only will He cast forth the unclean spirit, but He will effectually preclude its return. He will put His Holy Spirit within you, and that Divine Occupant will make you so happy at home, that you will not need to wander through dry places, seeking rest and finding none. The sweetness of new and holy tastes will take the zest from old and evil habits; and, not only clothed and in your right mind, not only reformed and respectable, but renewed and made spiritual, like Legion now passing his forsaken dwelling amidst the tombs, far from being tempted to return, you will only view your former companions with pity, your former haunts with amazement and horror. Like this ragged scholar, at the feet of Jesus,—like this reclaimed demoniac in the society of the Saviour,—you will find that your Divine Teacher is well able to fit you for the fellowship of the saints, and that He is One who will never suffer you to depart from Him till you are ready to be taken home to His own abode of peace, and love, and purity.

The Desert near Bethsaida: The Multitude Fed.

ACTING on the instructions of their Lord, the twelve had completed a perambulation of the Galilean villages, and had now returned from preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing many of their diseases—a sort of trial-trip or experimental tour by which their Master, whilst yet with them, sought to train them for that work which was soon to be the business of their lives. But now that they had returned to the rendezvous, it was just that season when the whole population was streaming along the thoroughfares—journeying up to the feast at Jerusalem; and as repose was impossible in the midst of so many visitors, Jesus said to His travel-worn companions, “Let us go into a desert place and rest awhile.”

But there was another reason. Tidings had arrived of the death of John the Baptist; and, in the present haunted state of the tetrarch’s conscience—ready to

scare at every spectre, and rendered unscrupulous by his desperate guilt—the least commotion in Galilee might be followed by fearful severities; whilst the recoil of popular feeling from a tyrant so sanguinary might precipitate a step which was altogether to be deprecated, and lead them to proclaim Jesus their king. And, as His time was not yet come, Jesus retreated from this risk of commotion, and withdrew into a distant solitude.

But why should we scruple to add as another possible element in the Saviour's retirement, the solemn musings awakened by the death of the Baptist? John was the kinsman of Jesus. He had spent his life in the service of Messiah; and now he had fallen the first of His martyrs. And although, so far as John was concerned, there could only be joy at his entrance into the heavenly blessedness, his cruel fate was but an earnest of what awaited Christ's faithful witnesses in this evil world. With such a prospect, was it right to go on with the gospel? Was it worthy of the mild and merciful Jesus to persist in a plan which was thus unsheathing a new sword in the world, which was evidently kindling a new fire in the earth? For it really amounted to this. If Jesus carried through His enterprise, He could even then foresee the fearful amount of human suffering it involved—the thousands—nay, myriads—whom it should consign to dungeons and galleys—the multitudes who should

be tortured to death by agonies too fearful to contemplate—the millions whom attachment to Himself should subject to privation and exile, to poverty and pain. And in the survey of all that mournful multitude—the mighty army of martyrs, crucified, impaled, beheaded, sawn in sunder, hurled over the cliffs of Piedmont, drowned in the frozen lakes of Holland, roasted in the fires of Spain, shot on the moors of Scotland, buried alive in Italian prisons—in surveying all that host of secondary martyrs, their outlawed orphans and broken-hearted widows, was it humane, was it right in the Prophet of Nazareth to persist with a system so fraught with sorrow? Instead of retiring to the desert, would it not be better to return to that heaven whence He came, and leave the world to its own tranquil tenor?

But to leave the world to its tranquil tenor would have been to leave it to perdition. It would have been to leave it, not a world of mingled good and evil, but a world of triumphant wickedness. It would have been to leave it, not a world of righteous sufferers and unrighteous oppressors, but a world of warring fiends; a world where, like Indian savages torturing one another, both the martyrs and their murderers would have been alike brutal and unlovely. To make it a better world, it was needful that some should suffer; to make it a world more true, more holy, more devout, it was essential that some should be so holy, so truthful, so

devout, that the rest could not tolerate them: in other words, bad as men now are, the only cure is that some Abels should be so good that the Cains cannot endure them. And if the martyr's pains are sharp, they are also short; and his momentary cross is followed by an everlasting crown. And whilst for himself he wins the snowy robe and the immortal palm, for the world he earns its true tranquillity. The sufferer for a great principle is a saviour of society; and the sufferer for the gospel is a benefactor to mankind. And, therefore, foreseeing all the "great fight of afflictions" that awaited His affectionate followers; beholding in this dark deed of Herod the first of a long series of atrocities; but also foreseeing how, from the ashes of every pile would spring hundreds of happy converts, and thousands of Christian homes; across the Red Sea of martyrdom, descrying the only path to the world's Land of Promise; and with His own mind made up to be Himself the next who should ford its gulf of sorrow—the Saviour did not retrace His steps: but now that the herald was slain, and with His thoughts constantly travelling to that ensanguined dungeon where John had finished his testimony, the Prince of Peace Himself took up the topic, and discoursed to eager listeners "concerning the kingdom of God."*

For, betwixt the fame of His wonders, and the

* Luke ix. 11.

avidity to hear His words, it was not long till the solitary place became a vast conventicle. And as from the eminence where they sate Jesus looked down and saw the streams of pilgrims flowing in from every northern path, adverting to the unpeopled character of that up-land region, He said to Philip, who was a native of the place,* “Whence shall we buy bread, that they may eat?” and Philip’s answer indicated that, even if the shops of Bethsaida could furnish a sufficient supply, it would cost all the money they had amongst them to feed such a multitude. “Knowing what he would do,” and touched with the case of a people who had neither a good prince to rule them nor kind pastors to teach them, Jesus neither resented the invasion of his retirement, nor sought a more secluded resting-place, but devoted the day to these “sheep without a shepherd.” Such of them as needed healing, He cured of their diseases; and to all of them He discoursed at length on the things of the kingdom. But at last the apostles grew uneasy. The shadows were lengthening, and night would soon enclose them. So they went up to their Master, and said, “This is a desert place, and now the day is far passed; send them away, that they may go into the country round about, and into the villages, and buy themselves bread: for they have nothing to eat.” Jesus said, “They need not depart; give ye them to

* John vi. 5.

eat." Like Philip, thinking how a single meal to such a company would exhaust their capital, the two hundred pence which was probably the sum then in their common purse, they answered, "Shall we go and buy two hundred pennyworth of bread, and give them to eat?" He replied, "How many loaves have ye? go and see." Andrew reported, "There is a lad here who hath five barley loaves and two little fishes; but what are these among so many?" But just as if it were ample provision, Jesus bade them bring it; and in the meanwhile, He directed the disciples to arrange the crowd, seating them fifty in a row, and facing one another, so that the entire concourse was disposed in some fifty groups of a hundred each. And when all were ready, Jesus took the loaves and fishes, and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He thanked the Giver of all good. How strange to see Him standing with these barley cakes in one hand, and these two small fishes in the other, whilst the hungry multitude were waiting for a meal! And yet how like the position of Israel's tented million, when there was not a handful of corn in all the camp, but heaven was about to rain the bread of angels at every door! And now, breaking up the loaves, He handed them to the disciples; and passing down the several ranges, the disciples distributed to all the five thousand guests, and repeated the same process with the fishes, till "they did all eat, and were filled." Then, when the

hunger of each was satisfied, Jesus said to the disciples, "Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost;" and making another tour of the company, each disciple filled his basket, so that not only was the bread so multiplied that the small loaves, which could scarcely have sufficed one little family, feasted several thousands; but the manifold wonder was crowned when the broken pieces so far exceeded the original supply.

This is one of a few miracles which benefited a large multitude at once. A solitary paralytic—"a few sick folk"—two demoniacs—ten lepers—it was usually on single sufferers or little groups that the beneficence of the Saviour was expended. But here, as on a similar occasion subsequently, not units but thousands came in for a share in His great liberality. And though the gratitude of a multitude is seldom so intense as the gratitude of an individual or a family; though even in the case of the ten lepers the sense of obligation was so diluted that only one of the ten felt constrained to thank his benefactor; or, to take the highest of all illustration—that mercy which extends to millions—though few feel so grateful for that widely-shared blessing, salvation, as to say, "Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift:" yet still, wide-reaching blessings are the way of the Most High, and gifts which gladden thousands are God-like. And although it may be true that the

bosoms in which the mercy of Jesus lingered most tenderly were such as blind Bartimeus and the widow of Nain, Simon's wife's mother and the sisters of Lazarus, still it was fitting that some signs and wonders should be scattered more broad-cast, and that a palpable proof should be given, that if any distress still lingered among the millions of mankind, it was not because there was not present a Power able to heal them. Accordingly, such as had need of healing He cured of their diseases, and, along with all the rest, regaled them with a banquet, the product of immediate and manifest omnipotence.

The Sea of Galilee: The Tempest Stilled.

CHRIST had fed five thousand with five loaves and two fishes. The miracle, in connexion with His discourses, at once suggested to the multitude that lawgiver who fed the fathers with manna in the desert, and they began to whisper their surmise to one another, till the rumour ran, "Verily, this is THAT PROPHET who is to come into the world." Like unto Moses, like the great lawgiver in his prodigies, and like him in his peerless revelations of the mind of God, and coming at the predicted conjuncture, why should they defer any longer? Instead of the besotted and imbecile Herod, and as a deliverer from the modern Pharaoh, the taskmaster Roman, why should they not obey the indications of Providence, and install at once as their monarch a Prophet whose hand was a horn of plenty, and His lips a lively oracle?

Jesus knew their thoughts, and He deprecated such procedure. To be king of the Jews was to Him no ambition; and a popular rising, a tumultuary proclamation of a rival prince, would only bring misery on

His kindred, the obscure descendants of David, and furnish a pretext to His priestly enemies. Christ's kingdom was not of this world; and up to the last week of His mortal life—up to the time of that procession from Jericho to Jerusalem, when the pent-up enthusiasm of years burst forth in “hosannas to the Son of David”—He never permitted any demonstration which might either alarm the rulers or compromise His apostles. And as He could see the movement in the concourse, and as He knew that the populace would have abettors, all too eager, in His own disciples—in the men who panted for high places in the coming kingdom—“he constrained his disciples to get into a ship,” and go before Him to Bethsaida; whilst, relieved of their presence, He himself undertook to dismiss the multitude.

Soon was the encampment broken up, and, with thankful acknowledgments on the one side, and kind and gentle parting counsels on the other, the crowd melted away. The last stragglers had rounded the shoulder of the hill; and yonder pinnacle on the lake would be the boat with the twelve. All was growing silent and cool; and as Jesus sate in the solitude and gazed on the flattened grass, where His guests had lately dined, and where the birds of the air now came for their banquet, the curtain of darkness spread over the scene. But He Himself did not withdraw. In order to find the society He wished, there was no need

that He should go to Bethsaida. Already in that solitary place His Father was present, and Jesus designed to spend the night-watches in communion and converse with Him. But whilst from that river of pleasures He was regaling His weary spirit, and fortifying His soul for further toils and trials, already the night wind sighed in the mountain glen, and loud gusts roaring down the gorge announced what a wild time the voyagers would be finding on the water. But it was not till long after midnight that Jesus went to join them. Bending on their oars, and exerting all their strength, they had made only three or four miles against the blast, when their practised eye espied an object approaching from the shore. No ship, no osprey skimming with outspread wings,—now hid behind a lofty billow, now poising on its crest—it must surely be a spirit, the guardian angel of the lake, or some phantom from the unseen world; and as they dropped their oars, a cry of consternation reached the mysterious pilgrim, now plainly a human figure, and who looked as if he were passing by.* Instantly, however, and not desiring to practise on their fears, Jesus exclaimed, “Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid.” In the nearness, and in the lull of the tempest, Peter was sure it was the Master; and starting up, he called out, “Lord, if it be thou, command me to come to thee on the water.” Whilst, doubtless,

* Mark vi. 48; Matt. xiv. 22, 23.

designed as a tribute to his Master's might, possibly a certain measure of curiosity and vanity might mingle with the offer, and Peter might feel, "I, too, would like to do as much: I wonder if I, too, could tread the sea." And as Jesus bade him "come," he vaulted from the vessel's edge; but possibly just then a squall struck up, and as in a moment Peter realised his predicament—the black gulf below, and the angry waves all round—he rued his rashness; a panic seized him; the liquid pavement yielded, and in the cold abyss he would have settled down, had not an outstretched hand forthwith met his cry of terror, and raised him to the surface, and borne him up the vessel's side. That instant the wind ceased; and the grateful voyagers came and worshipped Jesus, saying, "Of a truth thou art the Son of God:" and just as yester evening the miraculous feast had made them believers, but in the interval the storm had anew made them infidels, so once more they yielded to their amazement, and felt as if their faith could never fail them again.

An incident which shews the fugacity of our convictions: how faint and fleeting are our strongest impressions. Perhaps the disciples were a little mortified at being sent on shipboard, when they expected in a few minutes to hear their Master proclaimed King of Israel; but whatever might be their feeling, they had come away direct from a wonderful scene—a scene quite as wonderful as if their Master had bidden

the firmament open and rain loaves on the multitude. They could hardly help feeling, what even the strangers felt, that this was "the Prophet," in very deed the Son of God, as they themselves had often hailed Him. But the wind fell contrary. They had to haul down the yard, and fold away the sail; and, weary as they were, they must needs get out the oars and take to rowing. This made them cross and sullen, and haply, in some hearts, the thought was rising, Could not this man who gave these strangers such a feast, have given his own servants fair weather? At all events, they were not so favoured as on a former voyage. There was no Jesus asleep in the hinder part of the ship, whom they could go and awaken, with the demand, "Master, carest thou not that we perish?" That of itself was perplexing. Their previous perils He had always shared, and out of them all delivered them; but this time there was no hope from that quarter, for in quitting the solitary place, they had taken the only vessel with them: and now they felt very disheartened and forlorn, and thought it quite possible they might perish, and their Master far away.

A fluctuation of feeling which happens constantly. Reading some work of Christian evidence, you felt so certain that the saying is faithful, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," that you said to yourself, That point is settled: that fact is history:

by that conclusion I abide for ever. But by-and-by, in some cold sophistical society, among cavilling acquaintances, your mind was unhinged or your soul was frost-bitten; there was no longer the same point and precision in the proof; or you exemplified, what we so often see, the difference between the fact that is firm and the heart that is fixed. Or, when in distress about your soul, you took up the Bible, and you were directed to some gospel with Heaven's sunshine beaming over it, and you said, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases;" and you resolved that, whatever you might hereafter forget, you would never forget the good-will of God and the merits of Immanuel—that, whatever else you might doubt, you would never question the amplitude of the atonement and the security of the sinner who pleads it. You had found a pearl of great price, and silent tears or outspoken thanks proclaimed your happiness. But you fell asleep on some enchanted ground, and woke up to find that your treasure was gone: you came in from life's coarse avocations and found that the gem in your signet had dropped out whilst you dredged in the ditch or moiled in the quarry. In the softness of an idle life, or the secularity of a busy one; more likely still, through some sinful step or guilty connivance, you lost the blessedness you spake of; and when sober or anxious moments came again, you

could neither see the gospel so true, nor the Saviour so gracious, as you had seen them heretofore. Or in some auspicious season you were so moved and melted by the goodness of the Lord—you stood so astonished at some singular interposition, some miraculous feast or opportune mercy—that you felt you could never be diffident or desponding any more. But anon, the barrel of meal was failing; difficulties were thickening around you; a tempest was rising, and like the disciples sent into the midst of a storm when they hoped to see a coronation—like them you consider not the miracle of the loaves, for your heart is hardened. You are so mortified and so miserable that you begin to ask, Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath He in anger shut up His tender mercies? And it is perhaps more than you can do to keep from calumniating the ways of Providence, and charging God foolishly.

The truth is, there is in us no feeling permanently good except what is put there and kept there by God Himself. To a sinless being, the thing unnatural is to doubt the goodness and the truth of God: to a sinful being, it is hard to believe in the benevolence toward himself of a holy God—it is hard to believe in God at all. And though strength of evidence—though stress of argument may sometimes make us fancy that we are thoroughly convinced—though a brilliant presentation of the truth, or a striking Providence

may intensify our indolent assent into a transient assurance or fervid emotion, in order to sustain the right feeling, nothing less will suffice than a constant interposition of God's own Spirit, who alone can conquer into a habitual dependence on God our carnal enmity.

For the presence of that Comforter—for the calm and continuous convictions which He imparts—let us ever pray; and whilst the men whom Moses, and the prophets, and a Saviour risen from the dead, cannot convince—whilst they keep ever repeating, “Rabbi, shew us another sign”—be ours the apostles’ wiser petition, “Lord, increase our faith.” Whilst the morbid appetite for marvels keeps ever crying, “Give, give,” let us, as we gaze on the marvels, covet earnestly that best gift, a sincere and docile spirit—a purged and open eye. Equally remote from that scepticism which forgets what a few hours ago its own hands were handling, and that superstition which describes a phantom more readily than a living Saviour, let us pray for that faith which, lulling the storm in the mariner, will leave us no longer so many Reubens, “unstable as water,” and who can never “prevail.” Let us pray for that faith which, stilling the fears and fancies that tumultuate through our own soul, will leave a great calm, in the midst of which we may fall down and worship the Son of God.

Again : The experience of Peter shews us the dis-

inction betwixt faith and physical courage—the difference, some would say, betwixt faith and forwardness. There was no occasion for Peter to adventure on the deep. In a few moments the Master would have been on board. But the apostle felt an impulse—the same generous sort of impulse which, after his Lord's resurrection, espying Jesus on the shore, would not wait till the vessel was worked to land, but bounded over the side and swam. He felt an impulse, and betwixt his eagerness and his wish to walk on the water, he volunteered to come to Jesus. But no sooner did he feel the cold waves swinging beneath the soles of his feet, and perceive the breakers curling on every side, than his courage froze, and he gave himself up for a drowning man. Perhaps there were in the same ship men of less courage but more faith. Had Jesus said to John, "Come to me on the water," most likely John would have obeyed, and scarce been conscious of the warring elements. Nay, we could conceive a disciple there, so timid, so nervous and fearful, that he could only envy Peter's valour: and yet had Jesus called to him, we could imagine that shaking reed complying, and achieving in safety the feat which proved too hard for Simon.

Yet we are very apt to confound with Christian faith the forwardness of a precipitate spirit, or the fervour of a bold one. But, without disparaging firm nerves, and without deprecating the frankness

which is affectionate and not officious, there is a great difference betwixt a brisk spirit or a brave animal on the one side, and a devout believer on the other. The advantage is all with the latter. And if, in looking to the future, you sometimes fear, "I do not know how I shall ever surmount that trial: I tremble at the prospect of that ordeal: it is like passing through fire and through water: I do not think I can bear that pain. How I envy such a one's hardy frame, or such another's heroic temper: but as for me I am a worm and no man:" if that consciousness of weakness shut you up to all-sufficiency, you will be more than conqueror. The temptation will be fully vanquished when the Saviour fights the battle for you. The affliction will be light when the everlasting arms are carrying at once the burden and the burden-bearer. The pain will be easily borne when Jesus lends you His own strength to bear it in. Faith is modest. It is not rash and ultroneous. It does not volunteer a promenade on the flood, or a flight through the firmament; but there is might in its modesty, and when the occasion arrives, it knows that the feet of the petrel or the wings of the eagle shall not be awanting. It knows that Christ honours the faith which honours Himself; and if it be from Himself that the invitation is issued, it will not scruple to exchange at His command the firm deck for the liquid wave, or even to tread the sea of death in the

stormiest night, if thus alone it may arrive in His presence.

Then, again, the whole incident lets out much of the mind and manner of our Lord. The multitudes He sent away, and in a little while they would be fast asleep, and dreaming of a golden age, with its wonderful banquets and royal feastings, and the Son of David reigning over them. But for neither Himself nor His apostles was any sleep designed that night. He spent it praying: and without intruding into that retirement, from which even James and John were sent away—without venturing to say what were the topics of the Mediator's intercessions on that and similar nights—we need not hesitate to say that the world is indebted to them till this hour, and will be more indebted by and by. Like the obedience which He was daily rendering, and like the sacrifice which He was soon to offer, these prayers of the Son of God were piacular and grace-procuring. Like precious pledges left in a distant territory, they are a sign that the place will be revisited, and that God has not done with a race whose Divine Representative endured and asked so much. These prayers of the Saviour, so full of loyalty to God and of benevolence towards His human brethren, are cords of love which link the planet to the throne of God, and are earnest of a day when the heathen shall be Christ's heritage, and the utmost parts of the earth

His possession; and notwithstanding all the fearful amount of sin which cries to heaven for vengeance, so long as one of these prayers offered on the hills of Galilee remains unanswered, the world is indestructible. "Destroy it not, for a blessing is in it." The whole of these mercy-germs must spring up and ripen, before the great harvest of the earth is reaped.

But whilst the Saviour was praying, His apostles were toiling in rowing. Whilst He was holding congenial converse with His Father in heaven, they were maintaining a deadly struggle with the wind and the waves. And does it not seem somewhat hard that the friends of Jesus should share neither the slumbers of the multitude nor the devotions of their Master? Is it not hard that, whilst the five thousand are in their beds, and whilst their Lord is in the Mount, they should be sent alone into the heart of the storm and the dangers of the deep? So, standing on the summit of an Alpine cliff, and looking down to the rocky table where for weeks the eaglets have been regaled with food fetched from the valley, it seems harsh and hardly parental when the eagle shoves her fledgelings over the face of the cliff, and, with ineffectual fluttering, they plunge down through the dizzy air, and would be dashed to pieces did not a lightning wing intercept their descent, and bear them back again to the eyrie.* The Saviour was training His apostles.

* "He will not have them to be clinging only to the sense of his bodily

He was educating them for a life in which cold and hunger, weariness and watching, and the perils of the deep, should be no small ingredient, but where faith in Himself, where the assurance of His perpetual presence and unchanging love, should be their constant recourse. And see by what beautiful gradations He taught them the lesson. See by what progressive steps He inured them to that life of calmness in peril and joy in distress. First of all, He embarks with them, but so far secludes Himself from their approach. He lays His weary head on a pillow, and when the squall bursts on the lake He still continues to sleep, and they scarcely like to arouse Him. But as wave after wave dashes over the deck, and already the craft rolls in the water, they exclaim, "Master, carest thou not that we perish?" and, mildly arising, He looks out on the tempest, and says, "Peace, be still;" and, as the petulant billows hide their heads, with magic speed across the willing lake the vessel glides into her haven. But this time He secludes Himself from their approach more effectually. Instead of shutting Himself up in slumber, He shuts Himself out of the ship altogether, and sends them to sea alone. They felt

presence,—as ivy, needing always an outward support,—but as hardy forest trees which can brave a blast; and this time he puts them forth into the danger alone, even as some loving mother-bird thrusts her fledgelings from the nest, that they may find their own wings and learn to use them."—TRENCH *on the Parables*.

it hard. They feared they were forgotten. And it was not till He stepped into the ship, and the wind ceased, that they felt how unjust were their murmurings, and knew that, though miles lay between, every stroke of the oar, and every strain of the timbers, and every stress of the tempest, was marked by their Master far away. And thus were they gradually prepared for such scenes as the close of the apostolic history so vividly describes—scenes where Christ's realised presence gave the sublimity of a commander, and, had he chosen, would have secured the honours of a demigod to a captive disciple—scenes where, no small tempest lying on it, and the water-logged vessel drifting, not on an inland lake, but over the wild Mediterranean, secure in his Master's presence, the Hebrew prisoner paced the deck, the only cheerful passenger, and soldiers and sailors, centurion and captain, were fain to take their orders from one whom faith in an unseen Saviour had suddenly revealed as a king of men.

The Fame of Jesus.

SUCCESSFUL INTERCESSION.

IN the old time and in the Holy Land, on the shores of a beautiful lake, stood a straggling village. Some of its houses belonged to farmers and shepherds, and some of them were fishermen's huts. But tall above the rest rose a nobleman's mansion. Its owner was a friend of the king,* and often went to the palace. He had one son whom he tenderly loved, and who, we dare say, he hoped would grow up to be a favourite at court, as well as the heir of his own wealth and titles. Like the other boys of Capernaum, no doubt the little noble had often sailed his mimic boat on the edge of Gennesaret, and explored the haunts of the conies and rock-pigeons up among the hills. But he was struck by a mortal sickness. His limbs shook and burned in the fever, and he could hardly lift his head from the pillow. His father got the

* From the term in the original it would appear that the nobleman held some office at court.

best advice, but the doctors could do him no good. The great house was already beginning to wear that awe-struck aspect which a house puts on when it expects a visit from the king of terrors; and when neighbours inquired for the little lord, it was always the same answer, "He is not any better." The father saw him getting worse. Every time that he stole into the dim chamber and stood over the young sufferer, it was a more languid smile which returned his greeting—it was a weaker and hotter little hand he grasped in his. Even the sanguine father ceased to hope, and, as he paced the hushed apartments, the bow and quiver and other neglected toys of the poor patient began to look like relics. Their owner would never handle them any more.

At this time, however, a wondrous rumour spread rapidly through all the Holy Land. A prophet had appeared, so mighty and so good that many thought him Messiah. Some of the nobleman's neighbours had lately seen Him at Jerusalem, and they could tell what prodigies He had wrought, and what heavenly words He had spoken. A thought crossed the anxious parent's mind. Perhaps, like another Elisha, this great prophet could heal his dying child. But, to so great a prophet would it be sufficiently respectful to send a mere messenger? And what if that messenger should linger by the way, or should somehow mismanage the business? Yes, he would go himself.

He would take another glimpse of the dear child, and then set out for Cana.

As he posted the thirty miles, through budding vineyards and green fields, many a thought rose in his bosom : a wonder whether this great prophet were indeed the Christ—a wonder if he were still at Cana—a wonder if he could be persuaded to undertake such a distant expedition—a wonder if even this would avail. Still, he felt as if he were carrying in his arms his dying boy, and the burden at his heart gave speed and perseverance to his feet. Noon was just past, and the villagers were reposing after their mid-day meal, when the pilgrim espied in the valley the peaceful hamlet, the goal of his anxious journey. Its wonderful guest had not yet departed, and, without any introduction, the agitated father at once accosted him : “ Sir, come down, and heal my son ; for he is at the point of death.” Already, with their morbid appetite for the marvellous, some of the Galileans had gathered around him ; for Jesus answered, “ Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe.” The suppliant did not argue the point. Doubtless, he felt the reproof was well-merited ; but, with the urgency of agonised affection, he only repeated his prayer, “ Sir, come down, ere my son die.” There is One who giveth liberally and upbraideth not ; and the Man of Sorrows was not the man who would upbraid a breaking heart. With the look of one who wills

and it is done, and in a tone of tender assurance, Jesus instantly answered, "Go thy way; thy son liveth." In that sympathising look the father recognised omnipotence; in that gentle voice he owned the Almighty fiat: and, convinced that all was well, the pilgrim resumed the road to Capernaum. The voice of the turtle was heard in the land, and on his homeward way his singing heart re-echoed the music of spring. To the eye of his faith, his son was again in health and gleesome vigour; to the same eye, Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ of God: and, earnest of the new life in his dwelling, he felt a new life in his soul. Nor did he need to wait till next day restored him to his mansion; for here, along the road, come the joyful servants to tell the news already known so well. "Thy son liveth." "Yesterday, at one in the afternoon, the fever left him." Yes, at one in the afternoon, and when the anguish-stricken father had been a day's march distant, interceding with Jesus, the fever vanished. It was not that the patient revived; it was not that his ebbing strength had rallied; it was not that the disease had taken a turn; but it had absolutely gone away. The fever left him, and the lad was well. Oh, happy father! oh, kind and mighty Jesus!

The servants told their master about his son, and now he told them about the Saviour. They had heard much concerning Jesus already, and now in

their gladness they believed it all. As Messiah, and as all which He claimed to be, they hailed their wondrous benefactor. It was a believing family. The father believed, and so did his recovered son, and so did these kind-hearted servants. Sickness left the house, and salvation came to it. And, although usually they were "the common people" who heard Him most gladly, among the first-fruits of the Saviour's ministry were a Hebrew noble and his family.

Two years passed on, and this beneficent career was near its ending. The same sweet season had returned, when new leaves are on the tree and twittering broods are in the nest, and all the Holy Land was moving towards Jerusalem. But from the stream of pilgrims Jesus and His disciples fell aside. To escape the double danger of priestly intrigues, and a tumultuary coronation on the part of the people, the Saviour retired to the furthest limit of the country, and spent a little while on the border of Tyre and Sidon.

Thither the fame of His wonders had already penetrated from the neighbouring Galilee. In the general mind it had only awakened surprise or curiosity; but there was one poor woman who heard it with intensest interest. She was not one of the favoured people. She was not by descent a daughter of Abraham. She belonged to that brisk and busy nation whose bold argosies used to fetch tin from our

own Albion, and whose pushing traders had colonised Tyre, Carthage, Corinth, Syracuse, and nearly all the mighty marts of the Mediterranean. But the Phœnicians were pagans. They worshipped marble statues of Jupiter and Mars, and other old heroes, and to the Jews they were peculiarly obnoxious as the descendants of Canaan, the worst progeny of Ham. Happily for herself, however, this Syro-Phœnician lived on the confines of the Holy Land, and she had heard the fame of Jesus. She knew the Hebrew expectation of Messiah, and there were circumstances which quickened her acuteness, and which enabled her to identify the Son of David sooner than many of His own compatriots.

She had a young daughter. No doubt she had set great store on the little girl, and had been cheered through all her wakeful nights and toiling days by the hope of what she was yet to be. But the hope was blasted. How it came about we do not know; but an evil spirit, or demon, had entered into her child. There could hardly be a more terrible trial. Just when the fond mother was anticipating a companion and a helper in the growing strength and intelligence of her daughter, to have her loved one torn away in the grasp of a fiend—her reason frustrated, her better will overborne, her conscience in vain reclaiming—it was a fearful affliction, a daily sword in that poor mother's soul, and to any physi-

cian or exorcist who could have given her again her child she would not have grudged her house full of silver.

Just then, however, she heard of one who was able. For two years in the adjacent Galilee Jesus had been healing "all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those who were possessed with devils," and "his fame went throughout all Syria." * It had reached the abode of this disconsolate mother, and now that a kind Providence had brought the Great Physician into her immediate neighbourhood, she hastened to consult him.

There is in faith a sound logic, just as in earnestness there is a deep divination. From the "fame" of Jesus the Canaanite mother drew her own conclusions. She inferred that to one endowed with such virtue there must be great delight in exercising it, and that even her case as an alien would not put her beyond its reach; and accordingly her mind was made up to throw herself on His mercy, and take no refusal. And just as her conclusion was sound, so her alertness was eager and her penetration was keen. The Saviour's sojourn was short. He had come into that region incognito. He courted retirement, and instead of preaching in the villages He "entered into a house and would have no man know it." But there is no ear so sensitive as maternal solicitude, and

* Matt. iv. 24.

although few in that countryside were conscious of the presence which now ennobled their borders, this grief-worn mother caught the sound of His feet, and made prophetic music of their beautiful goings. Through some friendly informant apprised of His coming, she soon learned His retreat, and rushed to His presence. It did not matter that everything looked unpropitious—that disciples dissuaded her entering—that they represented that for the time being there was a pause in His miracles, and that she must not trouble the Master. Nor did it matter that the Saviour sat silent, and seemed almost to reprove her intrusion. Her heart was sharper than the eye of apostles, and whilst they interpreted the cold look of their Master as a hint to send her away, under that cold look the Spirit of God somehow assured her she would yet find a welcome. “Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David! my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.” Such was her vehement adjuration, as, with clasped hands and on bended knees, she lay at His feet; but those that watched His countenance saw in it none of the accustomed compassion; and as, without answering her a single word, He slowly rose and moved forth into the open air, and resumed the road towards Galilee,* there seemed an end of

* Such is the impression left on our minds by the narrative. From Mark (vii. 24, 25) we gather that He was in the house and wishing to be “hid,” when the woman first fell at His feet. From Matthew

hope, and the disciples fancied that, like themselves, their Lord regarded her as a heathen dog, on whom the children's bread must not be wasted. Callous and case-hardened with that worldliness in which the best of men are more or less incrustated, they did not mind her tears, and they did not permit themselves to realise the misery condensed into the bitter cry, "My daughter is grievously vexed with a devil." No; to them she was not a mother praying for her child, but only a troublesome petitioner—a foreigner—a heathen—an accursed Canaanite. But though they had no sympathy with the suppliant, they were tired of her importunity, and they wished to put an end to the "scene." Heartlessly enough they said to their Lord, "Send her away, for she keeps crying after us." And, speaking out their thoughts, He first said to them, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel," and to her, "It is not fit to take the children's bread, and cast it unto dogs." "Truth, Lord," she answered, looking up from the ground, on which she had again prostrated herself—"truth, Lord," as much as to say, 'Yes, call us dogs. Ignorant, outcast, impure, we idolaters deserve no better name.' "Yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table." An atom of that gracious power—a mere morsel of that mercy which has

(xv. 23-29) He appears to have been on the road, and "departing thence," when He spoke the wished-for word.

made so many blessed homes in Palestine, would make of me a happy mother; and thou art too generous to grudge that crumb.' The point was reached at which the Saviour had all along been aiming. By this striking instance, as in the case of the Centurion, He had shewed the apostles how God can create in Gentile minds a firmer faith than Israel's, and had thus prepared them for that day not distant when it would be their vocation to take Heaven's bread and distribute it to heathen "dogs." The point was reached, and no sooner was this answer uttered than, like the mask falling from the face of Joseph, the "strangeness" fled from the face of Jesus, and the loving-kindness, long suppressed, burst through. "O woman, great is thy faith. For this saying, go thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter." The suppliant had all her desire; the disciples received a lesson; the blessed Jesus tasted once more His own joy-creating luxury,—the delight of doing good. Hasting to her home, the thankful mother felt none of those shadows thickening round her which of late had so often saddened her approach. No haggard figure darted from the door, and rushed off towards the forest. No young fury met her steps in rage and frenzy, uttering wild invectives. But, as she lifted the latch and looked in, there lay on the couch a slight and peaceful form,—her little daughter as of yore, in calm and holy slumber. The devil

was gone out, and though the rage of his departure had left the poor young patient spent and weary, he would come back no more ; and as soon as those pale eyelids opened, “the light of other days” beamed forth on the enraptured mother. The Son of David had shewed mercy. From that very hour the damsel was made whole, and doubtless, if they lived so long, amongst those who “were first called Christians” in the neighbouring Antioch would be herself and her fond mother.

Miracles of this kind we do not expect at present. Their purpose has been served. They authenticated at the time the Heavenly Messenger. They roused the stupid multitude. But the course of things is resumed once more ; and as the exigencies of this probationary disciplinary state require that we should have always with us the sick and the suffering, as well as the poor and the needy, so we do not feel entitled to expect a repetition of those gracious interpositions which so often startled an incredulous neighbourhood, and which prepossessed towards the Great Evangelist the pensioners of the Great Almoner and the patients of the Great Physician. It would disorganise society, and would go far to put an end to industry, humanity, and forethought, if hunger could always reckon on miraculous loaves, and if disease and pain could always count on a supernatural

cure. But although, from the necessities of the case, the prodigies have ceased, the Man of Mercies lives, and that "gospel of the kingdom" for which He bespoke a welcome by "healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people"—for that gospel He is as solicitous to gain each heart amongst ourselves as He was to gain the ear of Palestine.

Let us covet earnestly the best gifts—better gifts than bodily cures and temporal boons. Let us covet those gifts which Jesus is ascended a Prince and a Saviour to bestow. Let us covet those gifts for contempt of which the Holy Land was, in the long-run, so little the better of that Divine Visitant with whose fame for a season it resounded. Let us covet the remission of our sins and the sweet sense of reconciliation with God. Let us covet a meek, lowly, and obedient mind, a contrite spirit, and a tender conscience. Let us covet a holy disposition, and a soul turned heavenwards. Let us covet that great gift, the Holy Ghost the Comforter. These are the blessings included in the gospel of the kingdom; and in seeking them for ourselves and for others, let us see what light the incidents now reviewed cast on the mind of the Saviour.

1. We see the honour which He puts upon Faith. It was their faith which brought both the nobleman and the Syrophenician to the Saviour, and it was

their faith which carried back the blessing. So is it still. Christ honours the faith which honours Himself and His Father. And if any one asks, 'How is it that I don't get on? I have no assurance of God's love. I have no comfort in my religion. I gain no ground against my besetting sin. I have little enjoyment in prayer, in ordinances, in the Word of God:' the answer is, 'You don't get on because you don't go to Jesus. You have more faith in disciples than you have in the Master; nay, you have more faith in yourself than you have in the Saviour.' But it is only the Lord Jesus who can really do you good. You cannot save, and you cannot sanctify yourself. Christian friends cannot give you assurance. Ministers cannot say, "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt." But Jesus can. He has all power in heaven and on earth. Believe this, and act as if you believed it. Go to Him; and even if at first He should seem not to regard—though He should answer you not a word—though the first answer should be discouraging, "I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel"—though it should be suggested, 'You are none of the elect, you are none of Christ's sheep, you are none of God's children, you are a dog'—be not discouraged. Think of whom you are addressing. Think how much more love there is in the heart of the Saviour than in the best of His disciples; and as sure as you persevere, and as sure as there is mercy in the

Son of David, at last He will say, "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt."

2. We see the honour which Christ puts upon natural affection. Many of the sick whom Jesus healed could not come to Him. He went to them, or friends brought them to Him. But in the two instances now considered, it would seem that even this was impracticable. The dying youth could not be moved; the demoniac would probably have offered every resistance. And yet, in a certain sense, they *were* brought to Jesus. In the arms of faith and affection their parents brought them; and, although casual observation noticed nothing, the all-seeing Saviour saw the burden with which they were heavy laden. As the nobleman entered, Jesus saw next his heart a dying son; as the Canaanite entered and sank to the ground, He saw that it was her afflicted child who dragged the poor mother to the dust; and although in the one case He let it forth at once, and in the other concealed it for a season, in either case He was instantly moved with compassion. The father's love, the mother's yearning, in conjunction with their great faith, at once took hold of Immanuel's sympathy, and, as effectually as if the sufferers had come themselves, brought to His lips the word of healing.

We can no more shut grief from our dwelling than from our world; and the dearer the relation the sorer is the pang. It is very sad to see the roses wither,

to feel the thin palm so hot and dry, and mark the life's slow ebbing. And it is sad when the nursing and the watching are ended—when the cheerful gleams and the patient endurance alike are over—when there is no more wheeling out into the mellow autumn afternoon—no more carrying up and down stairs—no more favourite chapters read—no more hymns repeated—no more tender, solemn talk of Jesus and the New Jerusalem;—it is sad to see the little daughter in the coffin. But far sadder was the case of this poor mother. She had still beside her the self-same form. Yes, indeed, this was the very babe that once she dandled—the little one whose first lisplings were such a wonder and delight—the little Syrian maid who felt so proud to pace beside her mother, hand in hand, to the village well, and then, in all the importance of infant womanhood, so gravely guarded the cradle of a lesser one. But, oh, how changed! So rebellious and intractable—so malignant and mischievous—so fearfully possessed by the devil. Happy neighbour, who have laid your little damsel in the grave. And yet far happier both the mother of the dead and the mother of the demoniac than the mother of the reprobate. Happy those in whose cup if there is bitter sorrow there is not also burning shame, and who, in the day of their sore calamity, are spared the agony of crime. The body may be in the grave, and the spirit be in paradise—

the soul may be the haunt of an unwelcome demon, and at last, emancipated from the irksome thralldom, may be a bright and exulting angel before the throne. But for depravity—for lost innocence—for guilt—for this grief of griefs, is there any balm in Gilead? For this sorrow, surpassing death, can the Physician there prescribe?

He can. And these incidents teach us that the best thing which affection can do for its objects is to carry their case to the Saviour. You have a child or dear relation who is like to bring your gray hairs with sorrow to the grave. And what are you to do? It seems as if nothing could stop him in his wild career. He seems as if he could not stop himself. He really looks as if he were possessed with the devil. You have got good people to talk to him, and you have talked to him yourself. But it was of no use. He did not stop his ears; but as for giving you any hold on his heart, his will, you might as well have been a thousand miles away—as for giving you any admission into his real self, it would have been all the same if he had been at the antipodes. And now you have entirely lost sight of him. You know not where he is; and what are you to do? Why, this: You have heard “the fame” of Jesus. Go to Him, and take your child, your husband, your lost friend with you. Take him, that is, as the nobleman and the woman took their child. Take him in the arms

of believing and importunate intercession. "Thou Son of David, have mercy on me; for my beloved one is grievously vexed with a devil. He is the enemy of God, and of his own soul. He is the slave of divers lusts and passions. Thou knowest our frame. Thou knowest the affection I feel for him. Thou knowest the faith I have in Thee. O that Ishmael may live before Thee! O that this wanderer may be restored—this madman brought to his right mind! I know not where he is: at this very moment Thou compassest his path, and art acquainted with all his ways. And although he were here, he could effectually exclude me from his soul's sanctuary—from that mysterious shrine where sits alone and inaccessible the hidden man of the heart: but even at this moment, Thou who hast the key of David canst open for Thyself that door; even now his heart is in Thy hand. Oh, speak the word, and add a heaven to my heaven—a jewel to Thy crown!"

Discourses.

- I. MESSIAH'S MANIFESTO. THE KINGDOM.**
II. A SAVIOUR'S FAREWELL. THE FATHER'S HOUSE.

Messiah's Manifesto.

IT was still early in the Saviour's ministry. Only a few months had elapsed since He commenced His miracles at Cana—since He changed the water into wine, and restored to health the ruler's son. It was only a short time since He had preached the gospel to Nicodemus and to the woman of Samaria; but although He had held many interviews with friends and hearers, and had spoken in many synagogues, He had not yet given any general or public exposition of His object and design. If He were "the Prophet," He had not unfolded His message. If He were Messiah, He had not yet explained the nature of that kingdom which He had come to set up.

The occasion had now arrived. He had completed an extensive circuit of Galilee, during which He had come in contact with great numbers of people, and had healed all the sick who were brought to Him. His fame spread "throughout Syria," and, now that He had returned to the shores of Gennesaret,

He found Himself surrounded by an expectant multitude. From the edge of the lake, with its fresh clear water and its pebbly margin, He moved towards a neighbouring eminence. The crowd followed, and on reaching the top of a little hill Jesus sat down. James and John, Peter and Andrew, and other disciples drew near Him, and the general audience covered the platform beyond.

We can picture the scene: The little hill with its two terminal knolls or low horn-like hummocks, and the level space between. At the base of one of these knolls, the wonderful Teacher—the possible Messiah — about to open His commission — His countenance almost youthful; not yet “marred” by the career of hardship and sorrow on which He had entered, and in the eyes of many among His hearers still radiant with the beauty of beneficence—that lustre it wore when He restored health to themselves, or reason to their friends. Most of the audience are Galileans — boatmen from the lake, little traders from the towns, rustics from the fields and vineyards—but mingled with them a few of the wilder boors from the other side, a few of the carefully attired and more vivacious citizens from Jerusalem. Straight before them, in silvery fulness, spreads the Sea of Galilee—its nearer margin fringed with palms, its waters only ruffled by the creaking oar, or splashed up for a moment by the swooping pelican. Southward

soars into the horizon Tabor, with its copsy dome; and, though most of the hamlets are hid in dells and valleys, yonder is a white village which has climbed the steep, and which arrests the spectator's eye—"a city set on a hill." It is autumn. Perhaps already light clouds fleck the firmament, harbingers of the early rain; and from their rocky retreats in the adjacent ravine flights of doves have come forth to seek that food which careworn man must gather into barns. And now that all is leisure and silence—from no elevation except the height of His own intrinsic majesty, and with no barrier round Him except His own secluding sanctity—the Speaker opens His mouth and begins. He begins, and the music of His voice and the glow of His countenance, as well as the first word He pronounces, are each an utterance of the "blessedness" within, which He would fain transfuse through all that listening throng.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. Blessed are the peace-makers: for they shall be called the children of God. Blessed are they which are persecuted

for righteousness' sake : for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

To many in that audience each beatitude was a paradox. 'Happy is that rich man who holds his head so high,' would be the thought of many; but Jesus says, 'Happy is that self-conscious man who knows himself a spiritual pauper. He will welcome the true riches, and on his lowly down-drooped head, as God's Prophet, I pour the consecrating oil, and anoint him as a king.' And others think, 'Happy are those joyous spirits. Happy is that festive party. Happy are those merry-makers, who have always summer in their blood and sunshine in their looks, and who are able to forget both past and future.' But Jesus says, 'Happy are the serious. Happy those whose conscience is tender, and who have found in sin a source of sincere and profound affliction. Soon will the last tear be wiped from their faces.' Many envy the hero. Fain would you set your foot on the neck of the Roman, and once more claim this goodly land as your own. 'But,' says Jesus, 'the meek man is the hero. His foot is on the neck of vindictiveness, envy, and those terrible passions which are tyrants worse than the Romans. As my disciple, become your own master, and at once your empire is larger than Cæsar's. Be meek, be patient, be contented, be a child of God, and God's world is your estate, the earth is your inheritance.' Not that you

are to have no aspirations, no ambition; but "covet earnestly the best gifts." Hunger after righteousness.

But it is not easy to paint the rainbow: it is a vain attempt to analyse the breath of June. Of these benedictions, as of the discourse which follows, so deep is the meaning, and so Divine the charm, that it is only the Holy Spirit, taking the things of Jesus, who can convey them fully into a mortal mind. No wonder that their perusal has been the means of prepossessing for the gospel numbers of both Jews and heathen; and no wonder that the fairest and best informed of modern philosophers has said, "Of their transcendent excellence, I can find no words to express my admiration and reverence. At the close, the Divine speaker rises to the summit of moral sublimity. 'Blessed are they who are persecuted for righteousness' sake.' For a moment, O Teacher blessed, I taste the unspeakable delight of feeling myself to be better. I feel, as in the days of my youth, that hunger and thirst after righteousness, which long habits of infirmity and the low concerns of the world have contributed to extinguish."*

They are the preamble to a discourse, in many respects the most remarkable which even revelation has preserved. That discourse is the manifesto of Messiah. It is a proclamation of the sort of empire which He had come to set up in this evil world. It

* Life of Sir James Mackintosh, vol. ii. p. 125.

is a description of that kingdom of God which consists in "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost," and which Jesus sought to establish in the souls of men. It is not the gospel; but it is a survey of that territory to which the gospel is the gate. It is not "Believe and live;" but it is a description of that existence which believers ought to live. (And to a thoughtful man, who is beginning to tire of viewing vanity, who is sickened at the world's heartlessness, or who is revolting from the husks which the swine do eat, we can imagine nothing more opportune or more arousing than the blessedness of a true piety as here depicted; nothing more fitted to make him ask, How shall I ascend this hill of God?) How may I get up to the pure air and bright prospects of this Mount of Blessing? How may I acquire that character which Heavenly Wisdom has here signalled by such great and precious benedictions?

As has been already stated, this discourse was delivered early in the Saviour's ministry. It was uttered just when it was desirable to give both His first followers and the Jews in general an accurate idea of His object and mission; so that the former might know what their Master expected from them, and that the latter might know what they should expect from Messiah. And this twofold purpose was admirably answered by the mode in which the address was adapted to the audience. That audience consisted of

an inner and an outer circle. Close around their Master were collected the disciples; beyond them, but still within hearing, was a promiscuous congregation. It was to the disciples that Jesus directed His speech; but it was to disciples in the audience of the multitude. And, therefore, whilst the whole of the sermon is primarily spoken to His personal friends, nearly the whole of it bears obliquely on the bystanders. Every beatitude is not only a congratulation to the Christian, but a warning, a sort of sorrowful and reluctant woe, to the self-excluded worldling. Every exhortation to disciples, "Be not as the hypocrites," was not only a direction how to pray, and fast, and give alms aright; but it was fitted to startle those who felt in their conscience that in describing the hypocrite the Speaker was describing themselves. And then at the close, when He proceeded to point out the wide gate and the narrow, and described the foolish builder and the wise one, we can imagine Him raising His eyes towards the remoter rows of listeners, and leaving on their especial ear the solemn and emphatic conclusion.

Assuming that it was the twofold object of this discourse to teach the disciples what their Master expected in them, and to teach the Jews what they ought to expect from Messiah, it is most instructive to observe the Divine skill with which both ends are accomplished, or rather with which the one is

accomplished by means of the other. After His benign and beautiful introduction, the Speaker enunciates what may be deemed the text or main topic,—“Ye are the salt of the earth : ye are the light of the world :” and then describing the sort of light which Christians should shed and the sort of influence which Christians should exert, He sketches both negatively and positively the great features of the New Testament kingdom. It was no part of His plan to supersede the Moral Law, or to proclaim a saturnalia, during which every one should do that which was good in his own eyes. He had come not to cancel the Law and the Prophets, but to fulfil the precepts of the one, even as He fulfilled the predictions of the other. Nay, so far was He from lowering the Divine requirements or loosening moral obligation, that He goes on to instance two great standards of ethics which in His kingdom would be utterly worthless,—the one, the teaching of the Scribes ; the other, the practice of the Pharisees. To His immediate hearers nothing could be more startling. “If only two men shall be saved,” was their proverb, “the one must be a Scribe, and the other a Pharisee.” But to constitute a worthy member of Messiah’s kingdom, Jesus shews that their obedience must be more broad than the one, and their motive more pure than the other. To restrict the sixth command to actual murder, and allow all malice in the heart, is **no**

morality ; and to give money to the poor and say prayers to God, for the sake of man's applause, is no religion. Then, after contrasting the spontaneous and heart-sprung ethics of the Christian with the stinted and external compliance of the rubricist and rule-monger, as well as with the ostentatious exploits of the formalist, He reverts to the main topic again, and shews that it is by laying up treasure in heaven—by maintaining a single eye to God's glory—by casting off all carking anxiety, and trusting to Him who feeds the raven and clothes the lily—by cultivating strictness of judgment each towards himself, and charity towards others—by making known all their desires to God, as to a Father wise and loving—and by doing to others as they would that men should do to them—that they are to evince themselves Christ's disciples, and pour a saving light upon the world, a sanctifying influence on society.

Such is a brief outline of this wonderful discourse. Regarded merely as an effusion of didactic eloquence, it is unsurpassed. No passage inspired or uninspired can equal for brevity and fulness the affectionate breathings of its exhaustless prayer ; and it would be better never to have been born than to be able to read its opening beatitudes without impulse or emotion. Where shall we find words so plain and yet so touching as these, " Behold the fowls of the air : for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather

into barns ; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them ? Are ye not much better than they ? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature ? And why take ye thought for raiment ? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow ; they toil not, neither do they spin : and yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith ?” And when did a sermon ever end with a peroration so natural yet so noble,—an image so obvious yet so stately and impressive ? “ Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock : and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house ; and it fell not : for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand : and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house ; and it fell : and great was the fall of it.”—

The Speaker came with no pompous equipage. He did not alight from a splendid chariot, nor was He attended to His place by the *élite* of Palestine or any train of learned or brilliant supporters. Neither

coronet nor mitre glittered on His brow, no halo shone from His head. The sky did not mutter, the mountain did not quake; no trumpet was sounded; no note of preparation was heard. But the great Teacher sat down; and as the audience clustered round—like pearls from a horn of plenty—like the musical pulses of morning on the great harp of Memnon—blessing followed blessing, till He swept the whole diapason of goodness. Then, after this exquisite prelude, He passed on to unfold His heavenly ethics, in terms so simple that the boor of Naphthali wondered at his own intelligence, and yet so saintly, so celestial, that the dullest ear was awed, and the vilest for a moment felt the charm of virtue. And what made the wonder all the greater, was the ancient and familiar source from which those lessons so new and beautiful were taken. The discourse was avowedly based on an older law, and was designed to expound precepts given long ago, and yet the world contains no contribution to ethics so novel and unique. Like so many dingy nodules which from time immemorial have lain about on the village green, disregarded by the ignorant or heedless inhabitants, till at last a lapidary comes and splits them open, and in the heart of each reveals a nest of radiant gems,—the ten commandments had been preserved among the Hebrews as something precious, but rather as palladiums or charms than as wealth available for

their several homes, till, one by one, Jesus took them, and with His "I say unto you" laid open each several precept, and shewed how rich it was in hidden jewels, and how, turned to right account, it might have introduced into their own abodes much of the wealth of heaven. Like the seeds and bulbs which travellers sometimes carry home, in the wilderness of Sinai the Israelites had gathered up and conveyed to their own land many right statutes and good judgments; but, like the dry germs in the traveller's cupboard, the law slumbered a dead letter in the ark of the synagogue, till—"lo! I come"—Jesus came and hid it in His heart. Watered by the Holy Spirit, given without measure to the second Adam, these seeds of goodness quickened in this congenial soil, and after thirty years of fostering in Nazareth, were in full blossom planted out on the Mount of Beatitudes; and when the murmur of admiration rose, "Whence hath this man this doctrine?" He told them that He had found it in the decalogue. The germs of all these graces were the dry seeds which they themselves had fetched home from the barren crags of Horeb. He had hid them in His heart, and now preached their righteousness in the great congregation.

It was a marvellous sermon; and as in the induction of the Speaker's sanctity the listeners felt for the instant weaned from sin—as in the example of the Speaker Himself they saw how august and lovely

true devotion is—as under the momentary spell they could fancy themselves ennobled and uplifted, and already ushered on that better life in whose majestic panorama they were moving—they were loth to end the delicious trance, and grieved when the glorious lesson ended. Like bees hovering round the honeycomb, “when he came down from the mountain great multitudes followed him”—and just as the shepherds felt when the heavens closed and the angels fell silent, when Jesus ended, the people were astonished. The doctrine and the tone were new. It was not the hearsay of the elders, nor the quibble of the scribes—it was the voice of the oracle, it was the deliverance of a teacher come from God. No wonder that they marvelled; for on that hill-side they had heard a sermon the like of which their fathers even did not hear at Sinai. They had heard a sermon which was to be the text of a new dispensation, and whose fulness of meaning no sage of this world, no seraph of the other, shall ever be able to exhaust. They had heard a lecture on ethics, the symmetry and elevation of which were only surpassed by the Speaker's living example. They had heard a lesson as to God's fatherliness and fond interest in His children's affairs, such as no one could speak with authority save the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, and who on this occasion declared Him.

A Saviour's Farewell.

OF the recorded discourses of our Lord, the two longest are the Sermon on the Mount, and His Address to the Disciples in the guest-chamber on that night when He was betrayed into the hands of sinners.

Between these discourses two years and a half had intervened*—years filled up as never was any similar term of human history. During that interval the Lord Jesus had been the source of countless benefits to the land of His sojourn. Betwixt the lost senses which He had restored to many, and the many whom He had cured of direful diseases; betwixt the demons whom He had expelled, and the dead whom He had raised to life, there was not a single mourner or sufferer on whose behalf the interposition of the Man of Mercies had been sought by Himself or His friends, who had not reason to remember Him with affectionate gratitude. But there were others who were His debtors still more deeply. There were many

* The Sermon on the Mount, Mr Greswell assigns to September, A.D. 27; the Farewell Discourse, to April 4, A.D. 30.

whose spiritual diseases He had healed, many whom He had raised from the grave of sensuality, and given them the life of God in their souls. And if there be greater wonders, there is no mercy greater than this. To a soul sunk in corruption—apathetic as a clod, ignorant of God, destitute of all pure and holy aspirations, a mere assemblage of divers lusts and passions—to such a soul to impart acute moral sensitiveness, an adoring loyalty to the Most High, an avidity for truth and goodness, and thus to fit it for a glorious immortality, is a greater boon than a resurrection to natural life a thousand times repeated. But that boon the Saviour was conferring on some one almost every day; and, rendering its cheating publicans honest and humane, its hollow Pharisees genuine and devout, its flagitious transgressors pure in heart and blameless in all holy conversation, He was leaving in that Holy Land numbers who, when He came to it, were so foul as to be only fit for destruction, but who, through His own benignant treatment and the Holy Spirit's transforming, have long since gone to be the companions of angels. And, over and above, not a day elapsed throughout these thirty months when He was not living that life, uttering those words, radiating that influence, and achieving that work, of which we reap the priceless results to-day—of which the Divine perfections then revealed and vindicated shall reap the honour through eternity.

And now it was all but ended. To-night He would say, "Farewell" to His friends; to-morrow, to His work He would say, "It is finished."

That mountain of Galilee and this guest-chamber in Jerusalem mark two important eras in the history of discipleship. Until Jesus opened His mouth and said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven," it is likely the apostles hoped that the kingdom would consist in wealth and victory, in crowns and posts of honour: but the announcement of that hour went far to dissipate the delusion; for it was then plainly and authoritatively proclaimed, that God's empire is spiritual; that the king among men is the man who by the completest subjection to God has obtained the greatest mastery over himself; and that his is the blessed life, not who has the most gold in his coffers, but the most good feelings in his heart—not who has the greatest number of retainers to whom he says, "Do this, and go thither," but the greatest number of neighbours and acquaintances whom he blesses by his gracious deeds and benevolent prayers—not who has a palace for his abode, but who, having God for his Father, enjoys constant access to the King of kings. Never did warrior or statesman more distinctly explain his object than the Captain of Salvation then unfolded His mission. And, although the means by which it was to be attained were not yet

so fully made known, there need have been no doubt from that day forward as to the Saviour's aim. A victory for righteousness—the expulsion from this world of all that is false, cruel, diabolic—the enthronement of the living God in the heart of every living man—the founding of a kingdom of truth, peace, and devotion, which should at last be universal—the empire of God upon earth—a mark no less sublime than this was pointed at on the Mount of Beatitudes when the Heavenly King unfurled His standard and invited all comers to gather round it.

At first scarce able to realise this, in the delightful society of their Master the disciples were beginning to recover from the dislocation of old ideas and the unhingement of old hopes, when they were staggered by a new disclosure. Hard as it was to give up “the kingdom for Israel” and their own promotion, so blessed is it to be continually doing good, and so inspiring was the companionship of Jesus, that we may easily concede that a little longer and they would have been joyfully following their Leader in His world-bettering, sin-vanquishing campaign. But here was a new and stunning surprise. Their Leader was about to leave them: their Master was about to die! And if to earthly aspirations there were a check and a bitter disappointment on the Mount of Beatitudes, to their holiest affections and dearest hopes there was a sickening shock in the consummation

which they could now conceal from themselves no longer. The former bend in their journey up the hill of discipleship had brought them out on a prospect sufficiently blank and dispiriting; and as they saw the crowns and sceptres vanish over the verge and disappear, and turning their eyes, as He had lately turned His own, from the kingdoms of this world and all their glory, as their Master bade them mount higher, they felt a pang, and for long kept up an inward protest. But now, this second bend—this higher landing-place—what is this which it discloses? Oh, horror of all horrors! A gallows tree! a death of infamy! a cross, and their Master on it! large as life, and close at hand, their Master's cross, and in the misty background crosses for themselves! Truly it was with bitter herbs that on the eve of such a blood-stained morrow they ate their passover; and although they knew that it was of no use now to say, "Master, spare Thyself," no wonder that, as with cold and tremulous fingers, they passed round the broken bread and raised to their pallid lips the prophetic cup, their Master could interpret the silence and the anxious looks of His already bereaved and orphan family.

He saw, and He sympathised, and, as was His wont, postponing His own more urgent case, He proceeded to comfort them.

But that discourse, who can expound? This adieu,

as Divine as it is tender—this “farewell gleam of the Sun of Righteousness, tearfully smiling ere He plunged into the dark thunder-clouds waiting to receive Him”^{*}—these parting counsels of a Saviour beneath the cross—how is it possible to translate into our weak words, or transfer to our coarse canvas? From the opening utterance, “Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in me,” down to that unprecedented prayer in which the Great High Priest allowed disciples for once to overhear such intercession as He still offers within the veil, the whole is fitter to be pondered in the still seclusion of a communion eve, or read over in the house of mourning, or whispered in the ear of the pilgrim on the banks of Jordan, than made the subject of our hard analytic handling.

The essence of the gospel is God's love. The incarnation was God's love coming forth from the viewless, and tabernacling palpably in the midst of men. The atonement was God's love providing a satisfaction to God's justice, and making it as consistent with His rectitude as it is delightful to His benevolence to pardon the sin and restore and renew the sinner. The New Testament dispensation is God's love, so to speak, organised and acting through various institutions and ordinances—gently visiting us in Sabbaths with their hallowed calm, their tran-

* Brown Patterson.

quillising repose, their touching remembrances—more emphatically appealing in sacraments, with their solemn messages and Divine sanctions and pledges—articulate in the written Word and its great and precious promises—diffused around us in Christian society and its softening influences—penetrating our very souls in the solicitations of the blessed Spirit, who, as God's great heart of love, keeps moving, throbbing, yearning in every faithful saying to which we listen, and in every earnest prayer to which the feeblest saint gives utterance in the name of Jesus, and in communion with God. And this farewell address is, so to speak, a final effort of Incarnate Love to drown the remaining coldness and felt sinfulness and faint-heartedness of disciples in that confidence Godwards which, of all things, is the most sanctifying and sin-subduing, the most fortifying against hardships, the most animating to deeds of endurance and valour.

From His baptism at Jordan to this verge of Gethsemane, Jesus had lived in the uninterrupted smile of His Father. From the moment that heaven opened, and there came from the excellent glory a voice, "This is my beloved Son," down to this moment, when His soul was soon to be sorrowful, even unto death—He had never once forgotten that God was His Father, and that He was the Father's dear Son ; but His whole career was overcanopied and brightened by this soul-gladdening assurance. Travelling in the

greatness of His strength, or rather, we may say, in the loftiness of His stature, the sod was often cold and wintry to His feet, He trod on many a thorn, and again and again felt the envenomed serpent at His heel. But above time's clouds and earth's harsh weather the heavens were open, and God was love; and although His steps were often through rugged paths and painful, it was in a pavilion of constant peace and brightness overhead that He ever looked forth and moved onward. And now He said to disciples, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you." "If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." "Come up into my own pavilion. Submit to have your weak souls carried in a Saviour's strong arms. In the world ye shall have tribulation. That world hates me—it will hate you. It has hurt me all it could—it will hurt you more. But where I am, all is serenity, sunshine, peace. Keep near me, believe what I say, and the love with which the Father loves Me will include and environ you; and as I am about to take my last step out of the world, so be of good cheer, your tribulation will soon be ended also: your last step ere long will be taken, your Father's house will be gained.'

Delightful as it would be to dwell on that great legacy of peace, and that great promise of the Com-

forter which this memorable sermon included, we must pass away from it, leaving most of its topics untouched. But as "life and immortality" are so special a distinction of the gospel revelation, we may be permitted to meditate a little on that suggestive name which the Saviour here gives to the future residence of His people—"My Father's House."

The Father's House.

"In my Father's house are many mansions : I go to prepare a place for you."

THE present state is a state of discipline, and part of that discipline consists in the limits of our knowledge. Some knowledge we have lost, and some we never had the means of gaining. And among other subjects of inquiry none can be more interesting than the future abode of our immortal selves, and the mode in which we are to reach it. For instance, many would have felt it a satisfaction had the Saviour told us the precise region of the universe which is to be the residence of His ransomed, so that, looking out on the starry firmament, we might have been able to fix on the moon or some planet, and say, "Yonder it is. Yonder is the world to which the spirits of my fathers have already gone, and to which erelong I myself am going." And many would have liked to

know more precisely the manner in which the transit is effected. Is it an angel guard which convoys the spirit home? Or does the Lord Jesus receive it direct? And how does that disembodied spirit hold intercourse with its glorified companions? and, in the absence of all material organisation, how does it perform the acts ascribed to it in the glimpses of the better country which the Bible gives? And on all these points it would have been a great enjoyment to possess clear and assuring information. But on these points the only book which could have solved our queries is silent. Thomas did say to Jesus, "How can we know the way?" and Jesus answered, "I am the Way." Instead of telling how the transit is effected from the clay tabernacle to the house eternal, the Saviour virtually said, 'Leave it to me. I shall see to it, that where I myself am, there my disciples shall also be. See you to it that your souls are safe in my keeping now, and when the time arrives I shall see to it that they are safely brought home to my presence.' And in the same way in regard to the place. Christ could have told. He had come from it, and was soon going back. He knew all regarding it, and could have superseded a world of speculation by simply naming it. 'Is it a planet of our system? Is it the sun's own orb? Is it some fixed star? or some region so remote that no twinkle of its glory can reach these outskirts of immensity? Or is

it here? Is it within our world's own confines? Coincident with our old and evil earth—as it were, simultaneous and superimposed upon it, like the atmosphere of vapour which fills our atmosphere of air, and the atmosphere of electricity which fills them both, impalpable to our gross senses—are there a new heaven and a new earth already here? On the site of some busy Babel, where all is smoke and din and vanity, has there already come down the New Jerusalem, bright and happy as a bride adorned for her husband? And in the very scenes where we plod through leafless forests, and gaze on torrents brown with winter and its decomposing vegetation, do happier beings gather fruit from the tree of life, and wander along the banks of the crystal river? Are heaven and earth so near that, although ten or twenty years have severed me from a sainted sire or a believing sister, there is not a league of space between us?—so near that, to bring the soul and the Saviour together, it only needs the breaking down of a dark partition, and, absent from the body, I am present with the Lord? On all these matters the Saviour was silent; but just as all curious questionings as to the transit were dismissed by His own sufficient assurance, “I am the Way,” so all surmisings as to the place are superseded by His telling us that it is the Father's house, the Saviour's home.

“I adore the fulness of Scripture,” said Luther;

and the devout student has reason to add, "I adore its reserve." Every saying is significant; but there is also significance in its silence. On the subjects now hinted it could have been copious: it has chosen to say little. And that silence, what does it say? Leave secret things to the Lord, but attend you to those that are patent and practical. Make you salvation sure, and that salvation will make you sure of heaven. Be you a child of God, and the Father will take you in due time to the Father's house.

The expression, as we ponder it, suggests—

1. Home Education. We are apt to fancy that on the glorified spirit knowledge is at once to burst in its fullest flood, and inundate the soul with immediate and boundless information. But this is not the analogy of God's procedure. Doubtless, from the moment of entering the world of light, the soul will be raised above the clouds of error—above prejudice and ignorant prepossession; but it will be the work of a whole eternity to go forward along the vistas of ever-widening inquiry, and come forth into landing-places of ever-larger and ever-wealthier revelation. And just as betwixt the vastest finite understanding and Omniscience there exists the interval of a whole infinitude, so we can easily perceive how to the soaring celestial there is room for boundless aspirings, as stage by stage and platform by platform he mounts, and still finds that it is but the lowest step to the all-survey-

ing throne—the alpha of that science where no created mind can reach the omega. But just as a kind father takes care that under his eye his children learn what is likely to do them most good, so it will at once be the instinct of these heavenly alumni and the care of their Father, that they learn the most excellent knowledge. Much of the knowledge, for whose poor grains we tug and strain with ant-like industry in our present state, is of little intrinsic value. As one confesses who had amassed an enormous library, and gleaned a huge amount of rare and curious information: “After all, knowledge is not the first thing needful. Provided we can get contentedly through the world and to heaven at last, the sum of knowledge we may collect on the way is more infinitely insignificant than I like to acknowledge in my own heart.”* But of the knowledge which we acquire under the tuition of the Comforter, and of that knowledge where God Himself is the subject, it is impossible to possess too much. And such is the knowledge of the glorified. God Himself is known. Not comprehended—but apprehended:—much of His procedure understood, none of His perfections misunderstood. The plan of redemption is made plain, and the grace of Immanuel is made so manifest, that it will be almost a regret of the glorified that it was not sooner realised—that they did not trust His tenderness

* Southey's *Life*, vi. 192.

more, and resort to His atonement more habitually and more joyfully. And the mystery of Providence is made plain: and, like one who has been conducted through a tangled forest by some skilful guide, and who is often tempted to strike out near paths or smooth paths for himself, but who at last, emerging from the thicket and looking down from some lofty eminence on the leafy wilderness, concedes his conductor's skill; so, escaped from the thicket of this world's toils and trials, and looking down from the hills of immortality on the way by which the Lord has led us—that road which we often thought so round-about, and often felt so rugged—how affecting and surprising to see that it was the only right way—the only way that would have brought us *thither*! ‘That tempting avenue past which I was so roughly hurried, had I entered on it I must have been bemired in worldly lusts, and might have been plunged into perdition. That grassy opening, which I so preferred to the path through pricking thorns, would have led me to the lion's den. And that near-cut, as I deemed it, would have given me the whole journey to retrace. The rough way turns out to be the only right way.” And so, extending to all the events of mortal life, the story of nations as well as men, there will be no end to the wise counsel and wonderful working of Jehovah, as recorded by the historians of the skies. And then

"How great to mingle amities
 With all the sons of reason, wherever **born**,
 Howe'er endow'd ! to live free citizens
 Of universal nature !
 To call heaven's rich unfathomable mines
 Our own ! to rise in science as in bliss,
 Initiate in the secrets of the skies !
 To read creation—read its mighty plan
 In open vision of the Deity !
 To see all cloud, all shadow, blown remote,
 And know no mystery, but that of love Divine !"

"Now we see through a glass darkly ; but then shall we see face to face : now we know in part ; then shall we know even as we are known."

2. The Father's house suggests Holiness. A person may be constrained to live in a bad neighbourhood ; but he will not let bad neighbours live in his house. David lived in a time of great depravity, and Palestine was full of deceitful, dishonest, and violent men : but, setting up house for himself, the monarch said, "I will suffer no wicked thing before mine eyes. He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house : he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight. Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me : he that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me." And so, in filling up His great house on high, our heavenly Father has laid down that rule, Holiness becometh my house for ever, and without holiness no man shall see the Lord. And He has perfect power to enforce that ordinance. Nothing that defileth or

worketh abomination shall ever cross His palace gates ; or, in Rutherford's homely words, "No unclean dog shall ever set foot in the fair streets of the New Jerusalem." And, what is more wonderful still, if ourselves are admitted, even when we go in no sin shall enter. Washed and made white and purified, redeeming blood and the renewing Spirit will secure that heaven shall be holy whosoever he be that enters there. This makes it so good to be there. This should make us so thankful when we have reason to hope that friends of our own are there. Like Jesus, "they have gone into the holy place." Sometimes, when you send a child away from home, you have fears and misgivings. He is gone to be with good people ; but even there you cannot be sure what company he may sometimes encounter. But gone to the Father's house, you are sure he is safe. There there is nothing to hurt or destroy ; and there he will have no company but what will do him good. And, looking forward to the place, if you have got that new nature to which sin is the sorest burden and sanctity the sweetest luxury, how pleasant the thought, that in a little while you shall be done with evil ! Yet a little while, and I shall have sinned my last sin. Yet a little while, and I shall have prayed my last wandering prayer, and kept my last cold communion. Yet a little while, and even from me the Ever-Blessed shall receive praise without mur-

muring, and love without alloy. Yet a little while, and temptation cannot touch me, and even if Satan could come he would find nothing in me. Yet a little while, and I shall be in the climes of purity, in the home of goodness—in that native land of excellence to which, if not all the talent and all the learning, at least all the piety and all the virtue, of the universe are tending,—as every particle of vital air returns to the atmosphere, as every drop of rain will again be found in the ocean.

3. The Father's house suggests the Father's presence. This world is not the Father's house; but it is the school in which He has some of His children training for glory. A severe school to many of them, where they have often bread of affliction and tears in great measure—a severe school, where some of the tutors appointed by the great Teacher are stern masters, and where the lessons are hard to learn. And what makes the Gymnasium of Meshech so dreary is, not only the bad companions, but the rareness of the Father's visits. God is a stranger in this world, and it is not often that even His own children are cheered by His conscious presence.

“ But there they see His face,
And never, never sin ;
And from the rivers of His grace
Drink endless pleasures in.”

Here believers often complain that they cannot get

access to their God. They try to pray, but feel as if He did not regard. They cry in the night season, but He heareth not. But there there is no withdrawal of His presence, no hiding of His face, no frown, no forsaking: but all is perennial peace—for they are made exceeding glad with the light of His countenance for evermore.

4. The Father's house suggests the Family;—not only the filial but the fraternal affection—not only love to God but love to one another. In that better country God will be better loved, because better known; and our believing brethren will be better loved, because they are become more lovely and we ourselves more loving. There are many good men whom here on earth it is arduous to love. They are whimsical; they are taciturn; they are opinionative and dogmatical; they are imperious and self-indulgent; they are severe and satirical; they are beset with strong prejudices or evil tempers; and their excellence is as inaccessible as the fragrance of a thorny rose or the nectar inside an adamant shell. But in that genial region, the spirits of the just are perfect. Jacob is not wily, Thomas is not obstinate, Peter is not precipitate; but, like those plants which grow tall enough to leave all their youthful spines behind them—like those wines which grow old enough to outlive their original austerity—the flaws, the failures of earthly piety all have vanished in that perfect world.

But apart from the growing gainliness of the celestial citizens, the grace of love has also grown. Freed from the false fire which so oft intermingled with it in former days, it becomes a pure and God-like affection, going forth to all that is holy, and acquiring fresh force constantly from the exhaustless aliment of heaven. And whilst capable of specific attachments and congenial communings, it has all the confidence of the widest good-will; no shyness to the new-come denizen—no stiffness, no mien of strangerhood, to the redeemed of other countries;—but assuring looks and words of welcome to all who, from east and west and north and south, arrive and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of God.

5. May we not add, that the many mansions suggest the many occupations? The earthly temple Jesus sometimes called his Father's house; and within the precincts of that temple there were many chambers where priests and Levites and singers lodged, and perhaps such devout worshippers as Simeon and Anna, who departed not from the temple night and day, serving God.* And so says the Saviour:—‘As all around this earthly fane there are many residences, so in the heavenly temple there is accommodation not for one or two—not for myself alone, its great High Priest, who am now departing thither; but there are many mansions—there is space for a mul-

* Dr J. Brown, “Discourses of Our Lord,” iii. 27.

itude which no man can number ; room enough, I assure you, for all of you, and for all who shall believe through your word. And as, amidst your love to myself and my Father, you may be conscious of different tastes and aptitudes, so there shall still be scope for these. You shall all dwell in my Father's house ; but just as among the occupants of these temple-chambers, there are some whose special business it is to offer sacrifice, whilst others lead the psalmody—there are some who read the law, and others who trim the lamps and deck the tables : so in my Father's house are many mansions, for there are many ministers :—a several office for each, and room for all.' God has given to each his talent and his temperament, and in the Church below He has made this diversity of gifts not a discord but a symphony—a source not of confusion and disorder, but of beauty and stable symmetry. And so, doubtless, will it continue on high. The lily, when you rescue it from among the thorns, or when from the windy storm and the tempest you take it into the sunny shelter, does not become a palm or a cedar, but only a fairer, sweeter lily than before. And a topaz or a sapphire of earth, if taken to build the walls of the New Jerusalem, does not become an emerald or an amethyst, but remains a topaz or a sapphire still. And, translated from the tarnish and attrition of time, it is easy to understand how each glorified nature

will retain in a higher sphere its original fitness and inherent affinities ; and how for the many mansions there will not only be many occupants, but every occupant may have his own office even there. It is easy to imagine that Isaac still will meditate, and that the sweet singer of Israel shall neither be at a loss for a golden harp, nor good matter in a song. It is easy to imagine that Paul will find some outlet for his eloquence, and Peter for his energy ; and not easy to conceive that John the divine will be the same as Philip or Matthew, or Martha the busy house-keeper the same as Mary the adoring listener. To every precious stone there remains its several tint ; to every star its own glory ; to every denizen of the Church above his own office ; and to every member of the heavenly family his own mansion.

Our meditation has been of the Father's house ; and the great concern with each of us should be, Am I going thither ? Heaven is the Father's house—but the Father's house is the children's house. Am I a child of God ? Can I say, Abba, Father ? Have I that love to God, that where He is it would be my wish and joy to be ? It is the holy place. Would a holy place please me ? Do I delight in holy employments now ? Do I love the Sabbath-day ? Do I love the house of God below ? Do I love my brothers and sisters—those meek and humble ones with

whom God's great house is filling? And am I on the way? or, rather, am I *in* the way? Jesus is the way to Heaven. Am I in Christ? Is He to me "the hope of glory?" Do I seek to be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, but His?

If through grace you have good hope of this—if you believe in God and in Jesus—then cherish home-like feelings towards the Father's house. Like an ocean pilgrim who espies a speck of dimness, a wedge of vapour, rising from the deep, and in the cold evening he scarcely cares to be told that it is land—chill and sleepy, he sees no comfort for him in a little heap of distant haze—but, after a night's sound slumber, springing to the deck, the hazy hummock has spread out into a green and glittering shore, with the stir and floating streamers of a holiday in its villages, and with early summer in the gale which morning fetches from off its meadow flowers: so many a believer, even, has far-off and frosty sensations towards the Better Land; and it is not till refreshed from time's tumult—till waking up in some happy Sabbath's spiritual-mindedness, or skirting the celestial coast in the proximity of sickness and decline—that the dim speck projects into a solid shore, bright with blessed life, and fragrant with empyreal air.

“Thou city of my God,
Home of my heart, how near,
At times, to faith's foreseeing eye
Thy pearly gates appear!

“ Oh, then my spirit pants
To reach the land I love,
The fair inheritance of saints,
Jerusalem above.” .

And as with its remoteness, so with its attractions. You might imagine a man who had come far across the seas to visit a father whom he had not seen for many years, and in a house which he had never seen at all. And, coming to that part of the country, he espies a mansion with which he is nowise prepossessed, so huge and heavy does it look : but he is told that this is the dwelling, and a gruff ungainly porter opens for him the grand **avenue** gate ;—and no sooner does he find himself in the vestibule than a home-glow tells him he is right, and his elder brother hastens out to meet him, and conducts him to his chamber, and soon ushers him into the presence of friends whom he is amazed and overjoyed to meet. So, in the thought that we must put off these tabernacles and pass away we know not whither, there is something from which nature secretly recoils, and which gives to the earthward side of the Father’s house a blank and heavy look ; and at the avenue gate Death, the grim porter, none of us can like. But still it is the Father’s house ; and by preparing an apartment for us, and decorating it with His own hands, and by introducing us to dear kindred already there, our Elder Brother will do all He can to make it Home.

Interviews.

- I. A NOCTURNAL VISITOR.**
 - II. THE BANQUET-HALL.**
 - III. A YOUNG MAN WHO WENT AWAY SORROWFUL.**
 - IV. ANOTHER YOUNG MAN WHO LEFT ALL, AND
FOLLOWED JESUS.**
- .



A Nocturnal Visitor.

THE Jewish Sanhedrim was a sort of parliament, a supreme national council, possessing also the powers of a court of justice. Disputes as to the interpretation of the law were referred to its decision, and in cases of heresy and blasphemy it exercised the right of punishing offenders, sometimes even putting them to death. Of this high court there were seventy members. Some of them were ecclesiastics, and some were laymen. Besides the primate, or high priest, who was the official president, and at whose entrance all the members arose, and continued standing till he requested them to be seated, there was a number of other sacerdotal personages, called chief priests, probably the heads of the different divisions, or "courses" into which this class was distributed. And besides some elders of the people, corresponding to our Saxon aldermen, or our modern knights of the shire, this council contained some of those scribes, or lay students of the law, who were distinguished for their knowledge of Scripture and tradition. Altogether, it was

a grave and august assembly, including within itself priests, elders, and scribes, the leading churchmen and the most celebrated scholars throughout the land, with the flower of the Hebrew aristocracy ; and, all the rather because the number was so limited, it was an object of great ambition to be a member of Sanhedrim, and known throughout the country as a "ruler of the Jews."

This was the rank of Nicodemus : he was what we may call a peer of the Hebrew parliament, and in his religious profession he was a Pharisee. He was evidently a man of thought and seriousness, and he had been greatly struck by the incidents attending Christ's first public visit to Jerusalem. The cleansing of the temple, the miracles which Jesus had wrought, the excitement awakened in the mind of the community, together with the general expectation of Messiah's speedy appearance, had produced a deep impression on Nicodemus. It was evident that Jesus was a prophet ; it was not impossible that He might be that great Prophet promised to the fathers. If He were Messiah, there was no time to lose ; if He were only an ordinary teacher come from God, He might still throw light on questions which occasioned anxiety to this "master in Israel." As yet the followers of Jesus were only peasants and poor people. 'This,' Nicodemus might inwardly argue, 'will render a visit from a ruler all the more flattering, and

on the mere ground of my rank I may hope for a cordial reception.' At the same time, the circumstance that Jesus had no adherents of wealth or distinction made Nicodemus afraid to compromise himself. He therefore resolved on a course which he hoped would at once solve his doubts and save his dignity.

It was April—in Palestine soft as an English summer—and the remainder of a Passover moon, which was lighting the pilgrims to their far-away homes, silvered over the temple, and flecked with deep shadows its white marble porticos. And as he steals down the silent streets, whither is the statesman hieing? for what clandestine errand has Nicodemus muffled himself in his mantle, and waited for the covert of the night? It is a humble lodging at which he pauses, and as he enters it is a plain man whom he accosts. But though the visitor has a great signet-ring on his finger and a towering turban on his head—all the insignia of wealth and high station—it is with marked deference—perhaps we should say it is not without a certain awkward air of embarrassment—that he salutes the Galilean stranger. "Rabbi, we know* that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him." As shortly beforehand in the case of Nathanael, so now with Nicodemus,

* "We know! That was the lofty word of the learned."—STIER.

Jesus confirms the inquirer's impression, and justifies His claim to be called a prophet, by giving a specimen of His prophetic intuition. Without waiting to hear the ruler's question, by anticipation He answers it. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." 'You are here to inquire about Messiah's kingdom. Become a new creature, and then you will be a member of it.' "How can it be?" rejoins the ruler. As if he said, 'We Jews are sufficiently regenerate. We have Abraham to our father, and the kingdom of God belongs to us. You might as soon say that a man needs to be twice born into this world, as that a Jew needs to be twice born into God's kingdom. *We are in it already.*' Then, in words fitted to remind Nicodemus of John's baptism, Jesus replies, "Verily, verily, I say unto *thee*"—not to the Jews generally, but to thee, Nicodemus—"Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." 'It is common among you Jews to say that a Gentile needs to become a new creature in order to get the benefits of the Hebrew commonwealth—the privileges of the peculiar people; and when you accept him as a proselyte he is baptized, and by that symbol of washing shews that he is cleansed from his old heathenism and adopted into God's family. But a few months ago not the heathens but the Hebrews—all Jerusalem and all Judea—

went out to John and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins, and professing to repent, for the kingdom of heaven was at hand. Perhaps you have been born of that water. Perhaps you have passed under John's baptismal washing. And in so doing you have confessed your need, Jew as you are—your need to be born again, in order to be fit for Messiah's kingdom; and unless you have really repented, as you then professed to do—unless you have been born of the Spirit, as well as of that water—you cannot enter the kingdom of God. It is true your descent from Abraham entitles you to certain privileges: but it does not entitle you to heaven. From Abraham you can only derive a depraved and corrupt nature. From the Spirit of God you need to receive a new and spiritual mind. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." "Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again." "True, it is a mystery—but how many things are mysteries! Hark to that sighing breeze. Your eye cannot catch it. You see not where the current of air commenced, nor, now that it is passed on its viewless path, can you tell whither it has gone. Yet you hear its sound, you feel its force: in the waving branches and the flying clouds you perceive its effects. And so it is not by perceiving the Spirit in His progress, or watching His proceedings, but by marking the results, that you

know when a man is born from above.' Still, to the inquirer, it was a dark enigma. "How can these things be?" 'Are you a public instructor, a student and authorised expounder of Scripture, and yet do you not know these things? Do you not know that God is holy, and requires a holy nature in the subjects of His kingdom? You stumble at the saying; yet we speak that which we do know, and testify that which we have seen. And, indeed, this doctrine of Regeneration may be called an earthly thing: an earthly man might almost concede it: for even an earthly man might be persuaded that he would need to become something else than he now is before he is fit to see and enjoy God. But if this earthly thing perplexes you—a truth scarcely beyond the reach of reason—how shall you believe if I tell you of heavenly things? This necessity of a spiritual renovation is so obvious that it scarcely needed a teacher come from God to tell it: one might have expected that your own conscience would have at once assented, and that on the very score of the fitness of things you would have granted that, before he enters a spiritual community, the candidate must become a spiritual man. Yet if you hesitate when I assert a truth so obvious and so open to your own cognisance, how will you believe if I proceed to answer your question, and to tell you heavenly things—things where your own experience cannot help you,

and where you must proceed entirely on the testimony of the only person now on earth who ever was in heaven.'

Nevertheless, in His condescension, and looking forward to a time when the invisible ink would darken, and when lessons now lost would freshen on the listener's memory, Jesus went on to state a few of these heavenly things. In other words, He at once explained the means by which a soul dead in trespasses is made alive to God, or born again; and in the same utterance He corrected the erroneous pre-conceptions regarding God's kingdom which filled the mind of His visitor. 'You fancy that Messiah is to be exalted on the throne of David His father; and whilst, like a potter's vessel, He dashes in pieces the pagans, you expect that in His exaltation Israel is to rise to be supreme among the nations. But that is incorrect. For first, it is not on a throne, and as a conqueror, that the Son of man is to be exalted, but more as Moses raised the serpent in the wilderness, and like that serpent, not a sight of terror but a spectacle of healing. And secondly, it is not for the destruction of the heathen, but for the salvation of the world, that Messiah is come.*' "For God so loved," not the Hebrew people, but mankind, "that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him [whether Gentile or Jew] should not perish but

* Dr J. Brown's "Discourses of Our Lord," vol. i. p. 18.

have everlasting life. For [at present] God has not sent his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved." And thirdly, Messiah's coming is no exaltation of the Jews at the cost of the Gentiles; for he that believeth on Him, even the Gentile who receives Messiah in the capacity in which God sends Him, is not condemned; but he that believeth not, even although he be a Jew, is condemned already, because he has rejected God's Messenger, and refused as a Saviour God's only Son. Nicodemus, do you depart? Are you only half convinced? It is not for want of evidence if you are not fully persuaded. Light has now come into the world. That Light is here. I am the Light of the World; but you fear to let the truth shine fully upon you, for you cannot afford the consequences.'

Such, as we apprehend it, is the purport of what transpired in this remarkable interview—the first of our Lord's fully-recorded conversations. He taught Nicodemus some "earthly things;" some things which had been already revealed to mankind in the Scriptures, and which, as a teacher in Israel, Nicodemus ought to have known; things which might commend themselves to unsophisticated reason, and to which the conscience of Nicodemus ought at once to have responded. He taught that Messiah's kingdom was God's realm—a community of holy men; and that, in

order to be admitted, it was not enough to be descended from Abraham—a man would need to be born of God—he would need to get again those tastes and affections which that son of God, unfallen Adam, once possessed. He reminded Nicodemus of those lustrations which Gentile proselytes underwent when they were “born” into the Hebrew commonwealth, and which, possibly, Nicodemus had undergone at the hands of the Baptist as an acknowledgment of sin and as a preparation for Messiah’s expected advent; but He taught him, that except a man experience an inward purification corresponding to the outward sign—unless he be born of the Spirit as well as of water—“he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” These were earthly things. They were things already revealed, and which belonged to Nicodemus and all his brethren. And they were things which, approving themselves to a sound understanding, it should not have required a teacher come from God to repeat and inculcate. Then Jesus taught this ruler some heavenly things. He taught some things which were not yet plainly promulgated, and which were only known to the Son of man who is in heaven. He told how, in some mysterious manner corresponding to the elevation of the serpent in the wilderness, He Himself was to become the means of a new existence—the author of a spiritual and everlasting life to depraved and dying men. He taught that

Messiah's errand is not local or national, but that He is God's gift of love to all mankind. And He taught that in order for even a Jew and a convert of John the Baptist to be saved, it was needful to believe on the Son of God; it was needful to recognise Him in the character in which God revealed Him, and to receive Him in the capacity in which God sent Him.

Thus much was taught. How much was comprehended or believed at the moment we cannot tell. We only know that Nicodemus did not then, nor for a great while after, "come to the light." Next morning, no one knew where he had been; and perhaps if he had met his instructor in the temple courts on the following day, he would have passed Him without recognition. Still, the conversation was not lost. It lingered in his memory. He mused on both its earthly things and its heavenly things; and, feeling more than ever that Jesus was a teacher come from God, doubtless he had many a secret wish to become, like John and Andrew, one of His disciples. But they were all poor Galileans, and Nicodemus was one of the most distinguished residents in Jerusalem. Besides, it is a hard thing for the preceptor to become a pupil: it is a sore descent for the public instructor to acknowledge his ignorance, and come down from the chair of the teacher to the bench of the learner.

Two years passed on, and Nicodemus was not suspected. It was the last Feast of Tabernacles which Jesus attended, and so great was the popular excitement regarding Him, that a meeting of the Sanhedrim was called, and the priests sent officers to arrest Him. The Sanhedrim met, and Nicodemus attended. You wonder what were his thoughts. Doubtless he deemed it safer to take his place in the court, than occasion remark by his absence. And possibly he hoped that an opportunity might arise of befriending the teacher come from God: he might do something to demonstrate His excellence, or to mitigate the malice of His enemies. Oh! what a perilous part to sustain is the part of a secret disciple! And well was it for Nicodemus—perhaps it saved him from forestalling the cowardly compliances of Pilate or the suicidal treachery of Judas—that no trial took place that day. The court was in conclave. The officers had been a good time absent; but as it was notorious where Jesus could be found, no doubt was felt but that they would soon arrive with their prisoner. And here they come at last; but instead of the rush and uproar of a mob scrambling for admittance, as when an important prisoner is led in, the Pharisees are aghast, for nobody enters except these foolish-looking officials. “Why have ye not brought Him?” shouts an ecclesiastic. “Never man spake like this man,” stammers one of the apparitors. I

can quite believe you, thinks one of the judges, for I have heard Him myself. However, that was a silent rejoinder; and one of his colleagues sneered at the poor bailiffs, "Are you also deluded? Has any ruler or Pharisee believed in Him?" And he cursed the lower orders for not understanding the law. "The law?" interposed a calmer voice: it was Nicodemus catching up his neighbour's execration of the people who do not know the law: "doth our law judge any man before it hear him, and know what he doeth?" At which the angry spokesman turned on him, "Art thou also of Galilee? Search and look, for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet." Nicodemus did not answer; the council broke up; every man went to his own house; and "he who came to Jesus by night" still went about wearing his disguise.

Other six months passed on, and Nicodemus had not lost his prepossession for this "teacher come from God." Doubtless he often mused on that first and memorable interview, and possibly some of its sayings began to brighten on his mind. Most likely he was now convinced of the earthly things, and in his own timidity and time-serving found another reason why a man must be born again before he can enter God's kingdom. But was Jesus really the Son of God? As such to receive or reject Him—is this actually the alternative of everlasting life or death—

the hinge of heaven or hell? And what is meant by the Son of man being set on high, as Moses set on high the serpent in the wilderness? These queries, as he revolved them in his mind, deepened his thoughtfulness and intensified his interest in the Prophet of Galilee; but although Nicodemus was the confidant of a fuller gospel, though Jesus had communicated to him some particulars of which no other was yet in possession, still he kept aloof; and, the very converse of Nathanael the guileless Israelite, he waited till the last of his difficulties should dispel, and his cautious mind be carried captive by some conclusive and resistless token. Amidst these meditations the rumour ran that Jesus was at last in the hands of His enemies; and that incident, which shocked and scattered the open disciples, was a spell which drew this secret disciple to Calvary. There it was—"As Moses lifted up the serpent, so the Son of man was at last lifted up." He was lifted up, and He drew Nicodemus to Him. His own mysterious prophecy is now fulfilled; and this "Son of man" is withal the "Son of God." The heathen centurion has just exclaimed as much, and Nicodemus feels it true. His death is a miracle eclipsing all the marvels of His life, and "truly this is the Son of God." To Nicodemus what a commentary was now visible on the words of that eventful evening, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son,

that whosoever believeth in him should **not** perish, but have everlasting life." Nicodemus now believed; and by the same incidents which stumbled others, and made all men forsake Him and flee—by the same signs, convinced and converted, the ruler tore off the mask, and pressed forward to honour the lifeless remains of the uplifted Messiah. But, lo! the same moment has uplifted the visor of another secret disciple. A brother ruler also believes. For already Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, has besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus; and thus He who in life had nowhere to lay His head "**makes** his grave with the rich,"* and the obsequies of the crucified Nazarene are conducted by **two of the** chief men of Jerusalem.

* Isa. liii. 9.

The Banquet Hall.

JESUS was surrounded by a crowd of people, when two disciples of John the Baptist arrived with a message from their master: "Art thou he that should come? or look we for another?" The motive of that message we need not now discuss. The Saviour did not instantly reply. He first preached the gospel, and He cured many of their diseases, and then He added, "Tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached: and blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me." That is, Messiah is come, for the prophecies concerning Him are fulfilled.* Messiah is come, for "the lame man leaps as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sings." Messiah is come, for instead of the old monopoly by which the rich and the reputable restricted salvation to themselves, the kingdom of heaven throws open its gates to the outcast and

* Isaiah lxi., 1-3; xxxv., 5, 6.

ignorant,—to those whom the priesthood despises because they have nothing to pay, to those whom the learned despise because they know not the law,—nay, to those who are in their own eyes small and despised, for as regards all moral worth they know that they are bankrupts and paupers. To the poor the gospel is preached.

John's messengers departed, and when they were gone, still dwelling on this merciful aspect of His mission, Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and spoke aloud the thought which had lighted up his countenance: "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." And then, addressing the audience, He added, "All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son but the Father, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him. Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." That is, 'I am the Father's plenipotentiary. I know His very mind, and I am invested with all His authority. Churchmen can prescribe penances, but I can give pardon. Scribes can lay on heavy burdens, and bid you labour for eternal life, but I can give you rest. Your own hearts can teach you that sin has made you outlaws from God, but I can make you again His children and friends. Become you my disciples.' "Take my yoke upon you and learn of

me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Of the crowd then gathered round the Saviour, two members now become prominent. One of them was a gentleman, respectable and religiously inclined. Like Nicodemus, he was not quite a convert to the new Teacher's doctrine; and yet he was impressed by His elevation and earnestness. His miracles were amazing. He had just restored to life Simon's young neighbour, the son of the widow at Nain, and that very morning He had by His astonishing cures conferred unspeakable obligations on the district of which Simon was a principal inhabitant. Perhaps, too, the day might come when Jesus should be more distinguished; and if He really rose to be king of Israel—if He should actually turn out the successor of David and Solomon—it would always be something to recall, "Oh yes! He was once in this house, and dined at this very table." But Jesus was still despised by Simon's own class. None of the rulers believed on Him. His attendants were fishermen, and all His antecedents were obscure,—Bethlehem, Nazareth, the carpenter's cottage,—and in his lowly guise Simon received him patronisingly. Had He been a man of his own rank, or one whom he delighted to honour, he would have met Him in the door-way with a cordial embrace, and conducting Him into the banquet-

room, the attendants would have taken off His sandals, and would have laved His feet and hands with fragrant waters, whilst the host himself would have poured upon His locks the shining oil. But Simon was a Pharisee—accustomed to judge after the outward appearance—and to his view Jesus was quite as much the poor man as the good man. He felt that it was condescension to receive such a visitor, and by the compromising way in which he managed the matter, he shewed quite as much anxiety for his own reputation, as gratitude or reverence towards his guest.

Simon was blind to the real character of Jesus : for he was blind to his own condition. Regular in his formal devotions, correct in his conduct,—always sitting down to his meals with washen hands, and thanking God that he was not as other men, “extortioners, unjust, or even as this publican,” to him a revelation of mercy was as superfluous and irrelevant as a pardon would seem useless to a favourite basking in the smiles of his sovereign. Not being “poor,” the gospel was preached to him in vain ; and when the great Teacher expanded His arms, and said, “Come to me all ye that are heavy laden : take my yoke upon you, and learn of me”—it never occurred to him to step forward and say, “Yes, blessed Teacher ! lay that yoke on me. Thou only knowest the Father : reveal Him to me. Rid me of my heavy

load, and make me Thy disciple:" for to Simon sin was no sensible burden, and there was little which any teacher could tell which he did not think that he knew already; and for the lowly, loving, son-like piety of Jesus, Simon's proud and self-sufficient spirit had no affinity.

So, dear reader, is there in your own mind none of this arrogant self-complacency? Looking at the sinful multitude, are you not apt to say, "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men?" And are you not apt to patronise the Saviour? You give Him a civil invitation to come under your roof. You have prayers with the family. You say grace before meat. You go as far as you can go genteelly. And yet were the Saviour accepting your somewhat stiff request: were He coming under your roof in answer to your prayer, might it not be said that He had gone into the house of a second Simon? Just look at this banquet board. See what a contrast! Jesus and a Pharisee! "On the one side the living spirit: on the other the letter that killeth. On the one side simplicity and godly sincerity: on the other outward appearance. On the one side the self-forgetfulness which seeks God's glory: on the other the pride which seeks its own honour. On the one side the tender compassion which saves the lost: on the other the unsympathising selfishness which despises them."*

* "Het Evangelie," by Doedes.

But, as was already hinted, in the crowd which had been listening to Jesus in the open air, there appears to have been another individual note-worthy. She was a poor outcast, and as she stood hidden in the throng, she felt herself the vilest there. Her sins were crimson, and in comparison with herself she envied as a holy man the hardest worldling in all the company. But as she looked on the Divine Speaker, and listened to His heavenly words, there began to spring up strange sensations in her soul. It seemed as if there were passing over her spirit a fresh, pure gale from the days of her childhood, and as if she were inhaling the bliss of innocence again : and just as her past life grew loathsome,—just as in the contact of a goodness so new and so inspiring, she almost felt as if sin could never be pleasant any more,—those kind and cheering words of Jesus fell upon her ear,—“Come unto me all ye that are heavy laden,”—and they nearly broke her heart. Was it so indeed? Might she really hope for mercy? Was that the Son of God declaring the Father’s mind concerning sinners?—and was He really so “meek and lowly” as to say to such as her, “Take my yoke upon you?” Oh! if she might only hope it:—if that sinless One would only teach her how to be rid of sin:—if He would only help her to throw off that heavy load, a long memory of crime,—her own debased and ruined self! Surely He was kind enough to do it,—

and the Father's mighty Son was able. But with these charming words the address was ended; the congregation dispersed; and along with a few others the Divine Speaker entered the house of Simon. Wistfully did the poor outcast look after them: for in that Holy One were centered all her hopes: from Himself, if from any in the universe, must come her salvation. But at that moment she might not follow Him. Yes,—He had spoken kindly to sinners in the mass; and she believed He would speak as kindly to the chief of sinners if she appeared alone: but she would like to hear it from His own lips—at least she would like to listen to that wonder-working voice again. So she hasted away, and got the most precious thing she possessed,—a box of costly essence,—and availing herself of that right of free entrance which still prevails in these regions, she found her way into Simon's banquet-hall. Stealing up to the spot where the Saviour reclined, she stood behind the guests, and the couch on which Jesus lay. The exact thought that arose in her mind, we cannot tell; but likely it was just the contrast between them:—‘Here am I so vile—and Thou so holy. All pollution I, and Thou all sanctity. A hell-brand I, enkindled from the infernal fire and destroying all I touch: pure goodness Thou, Heaven's kindness all incarnate, saving all who come to Thee.’ And as she gazed on those blessed feet which went about continually doing

good, and perceived them still dusty with the travel of the day, a tear fell, and, as with the tresses of her hair she brushed it off, it was her impulse to open the alabaster box and suffuse those sacred feet with the aromatic oil which she durst not pour upon His head. Indignant and disgusted, Simon observed it all, and thought with himself, This man is no prophet. He little knows what an infamous creature that woman is. But Jesus said, "Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee." "Master, say on." "There was a certain creditor who had two debtors. The one owed five hundred pence, the other fifty. But both were bankrupt. They had nothing to pay, and so he frankly forgave them both. Tell me which will be most grateful."—That is, We shall suppose that this woman is a sinner tenfold worse than you—ten times deeper in God's debt. But you have nothing any more than she. In that respect you are alike. Neither has any effects—any goodness—any merit—ought to meet the claims of law and justice: Suppose I were frankly forgiving both: who is likely to feel the deepest obligation?—And Simon answered, "I suppose the one who has the largest amount forgiven." And Jesus answered, "Thou hast rightly judged. Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house. Thou gavest me no water for my feet; but she hath washed them with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss;

but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head thou didst not anoint with oil; but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins which are many are forgiven: for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little." As much as if He had said, Were one forgiven who thinks himself so little of a sinner as you think yourself, he would feel little thankfulness: but God is glorified in the forgiveness of a sinner like this,—for great is her gratitude. And thoroughly to assure her agitated spirit, He added, "Thy sins are forgiven,"—and when they raised the question, "Who is this that even forgiveth sins?" with kingly majesty He ignored their cavil, and only repeated, "Thy faith hath saved thee: go in peace."

Yes, Simon was confounded at this woman's presumption. His own impulse would have been to hurl her out of doors, and he could not comprehend why his guest allowed her to come near Him. "If this man were a prophet, He would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth Him: for she is a sinner." But Jesus knew. He knew her case, and He understood her feeling. He knew that this was a pardoned sinner, who would sin no more. He knew that this was His own beatitude. "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." He knew that in all that apartment

there was not one to whom sin looked so horrible: nor one with a conscience so tender as that poor, sobbing outcast. He knew that it was a relief for her to weep: that she would fain pour forth her very soul in this burst of delicious sorrow: and it was good for her to weep. A joy mingled with these tears; and that blessed Spirit who had opened their fountain was meanwhile filling her soul with His own transfusive sanctity and with aspirations after new obedience. And where Simon saw only the "sinner," Jesus saw the pardoned penitent; and far from finding contamination in her presence or pollution in her touch, this brand plucked from the burning was to Him the dearest of trophies. To the Saviour no music could be sweeter than those sobs of heartfelt contrition, no balm from the broken alabaster so welcome as this penitent's tears.

From this incident we see what it is which produces true repentance. If you were going out into the open air on a frosty day, and were you taking a lump of ice, you might pound it with a pestle, but it would still continue ice. You might break it into ten thousand atoms, but, so long as you continue in that wintry atmosphere, every fragment, however small, will still be frozen. But come within. Bring in the ice beside your own bright and blazing fire, and soon in that genial glow "the waters flow." A man may try to make himself contrite. He may search out his

sins and set them before him, and dwell on all their enormity, and still feel no true repentance. Though pounded with penances in the mortar of fasts and macerations, his heart continues hard and icy still. And as long as you keep in that legal atmosphere it cannot thaw. There may be elaborate confession, a got-up sort of penitence, a voluntary humility, but there is no godly sorrow. But come to Jesus with His words of grace and truth. From the cold winter night of the ascetic come into the summer of the Great Evangelist. Let that flinty frozen spirit bask a little in the beams of the Sun of Righteousness. Listen for a little to those words which melted this sinner into a penitent—which broke her alabaster box and brimmed over in tears of ecstatic sorrow and self-condemning devotion : for, finding that you too have much forgiven, you also will love much. The soul which only grew more estranged from God in the effort to conquer its own enmity will become a joyful captive in the arms of Fatherly forgiveness; and taking up the easy yoke of that Redeemer who has taken off your heavy burden, you will find rest for your soul in the service of that Saviour who freely and fully pardons all your sins.

* A Young Man who went away Sorrowsful.

MAN, the child of God, was happy once, and he was happy because God was in His proper place; the Father was in the heart of His child. There could be no doubt about it; the living God was man's dearest friend and chiefest joy, and his blessedness was great, for the source whence it came was exhaustless. He who is the Treasure of Heaven—the King of its angels—the wealth of all worlds, was the Father of man.

So truly was this the case, that earthly sonship was only an image of the closer relation which bound man to his truest and most peculiar Parent. Had innocence lasted long enough, a sinless Cain or Abel might in process of time have outgrown the dependent and up-looking feelings which bound him to his earthly sire; and remoteness of scene might have interrupted the intercourse. But no change of place could have created distance from God, or suspended the communion with heaven; and advancing years would only have made him feel more profoundly the

tender and numberless ties which bound him to the Father of his spirit—his celestial Sire—his Parent proper and supreme.

God was man's Father, and the heavenly Father communed with His earthly child. He not only gave him food, which built up his body, but He gave him thoughts, feelings, affections which nourished his immortal nature—sights to look at, things to think of, which kept up the eternal life in his mind. And how did that life evolve? how was God's life in man's soul expressed and exhibited? For one thing in worship. He could never say sufficiently how grateful he was, nor how beautiful, how kind, how adorable his heavenly Father appeared. And, for another thing, that Divine life developed in beneficence. The conscious love of Infinite Goodness made him exceeding glad, and gladness coming from such a source made him gracious, communicative, kindly affectioned. Brimming over with blessedness, he was the fellow-worker with God; and, although it had only been to fetch a cup of cold water to a companion, or restore to the nest some callow fledgling that had fallen over, the smile of complacent Deity in the soul must have found an outlet in some deed of tender mercy; and, although it had only been in training a rose or grouping the flowers of a border, to carry forward the Father's plan, and finish the Father's work, was the meat and drink of Paradise.

A blessed state which was quickly ended. Man sinned. God forsook His place in the heart of His guilty and fallen child; and, alas! as He retired the heart closed its doors against Him. It was still a heart—still a great, greedy, affectionate craving thing, which needs for its satisfaction an infinite and all-worthy object. But the one object was gone; and ever since man lost his “treasure in heaven”—ever since he lost that God who is the gold of angels and who was the riches of Paradise*—his great effort has been to find a substitute. Instead of opening the heart’s door and readmitting the original and rightful occupant, he fills the space as best he can with idols. Of these the favourite and most frequent is the world or mammon. In that shrine which once flamed and glowed with indwelling Deity, and where the love of God sustained perpetual summer, there now burns, to make the darkness visible, a little night-light of earthly friendship or creature-fondness; and on that throne, where once presided the great I Am, now sits, in mockery at once of the living God and of the fatuous worshipper, a golden pagod, or mayhap some foul desire or sinful passion—a something which holds in its hand the strings that move the man:

* “Have money-worshippers really considered it, that the living God is not dead metal, and yet that He is, strictly speaking, the only *human gold*? Rich men are the men who carry God in their souls, and these are the only men who have the true human gold to give. The receiver of this gold receives an unmingled blessing; and the giver becomes richer by giving.”—Pulsford’s “Quiet Hours,” p. 31.

whilst, after all, his noblest faculties, like so much obsolete lumber, lie unnoticed and unused, and crumbling to decay.

The Lord Jesus understood, even as He pitied, the case of lapsed humanity. His errand was to restore man's blessedness by restoring God's supremacy. He came to set up anew God's kingdom in the soul of man. On the one side, as the great Priest-Victim He expiated the sacrilege of which man had been guilty in profaning God's temple, and in placing obscene usurpers on Jehovah's throne; and His own most precious blood He puts at the disposal of every penitent who seeks to cleanse his heart from idols. On the other hand, as God's Prophet and man's King, He seeks to make the sinner desirous of God's return to the forsaken shrine. He seeks to make the sinner feel how guilty he was when he said to the living God, 'Depart,' and He seeks to make the sinner feel how truly poor and wretched he is with coin in his chest but no God in his heart; with loving but dying children around him who call him father, whilst the Immortal Father owns him as no child. Perhaps even now that great Apostle of our profession speaks to some one; for Christ's mission did not end at Olivet—the voice which spake on earth still speaks from heaven. Perhaps even now the Lord Jesus has knocked at your heart-door, and the hollow sound that echoes back tells him and you,

that it is vacant or filled with ostentatious emptiness. Your chief end is to glorify self and enjoy the present world for ever; or at the very best, your chief end is to glorify and gladden that expanded self, your nearest friends and dearest kindred; and it misgives you that, beautiful as the idol is, it is not the living God, and that you would need to get something more before you can be sure of "treasure in heaven."

The evangelists tell us that on one of His journeys the Lord Jesus was met by a young ruler, who came to Him running, in his anxiety to ask Him a question. He was a young man of excellent character and engaging manners—so prepossessing that, as the interview proceeded, Mark says, "Jesus loved him." His first exclamation was, "Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" Reminding him that "none is truly good but God,"—Jesus answered by repeating the second table of the law. Half-pleased, half-mortified, glad to think that he had fulfilled this requirement already, but sorry that the great Teacher had no more specific prescription, he replied, "All these have I observed from my youth." By no means surprised at the answer—knowing it to be sincere though sadly erroneous—the Lord Jesus made the prescription more specific, and put the test another way. That second table may be summed up in one sentence, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Accordingly Jesus said, "Sell whatsoever thou hast,

and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, take up thy cross, and follow me." This rejoinder instantly rent open the refuge of lies, and disclosed to the youth his reigning worldly-mindedness. After all he did not love his neighbour as himself. After all he was not so desirous of heavenly treasure that, in order to gain it, he could part with a few acres of land. After all he was not so alive to God, nor so intent on His favour as to descry in the "good Master" any divine lineaments, or even to care to follow farther One whom to know is everlasting life. "He went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions."

There were interesting features in this young man's character, and for these the Lord Jesus loved him. Some who are of a sterner mould would not have felt so kindly. They would have scowled on all the amenities and attractions of this youth as mere natural goodness, mere carnal virtue, dead morality. But such as they were they possessed a certain charm in the eyes of Jesus Christ. He saw in them the hand of God. Even in these outward accomplishments and in this general correctness of conduct He recognised restraining grace. And in the mind of the Saviour, at the sight of this youth, so ingenuous, so sincere, and so outwardly correct, although still outside of the kingdom, there was awakened a sentiment very different from that which He felt towards false and cunning

Pharisees, profane and jeering Sadducees, and such open reprobates and ruffians as He sometimes encountered in Nazareth and Samaria. But with all these feelings of interest and affection, the Lord Jesus did not speak to him premature peace or dangerous comfort. He saw that this young inquirer was still in the bond of iniquity ; He saw that he had yet to discover the plague of his own heart ; He saw that he was one of those who fancy that they are whole and need not a physician ; and He knew that any answer which did not reveal to him his true character, would be to deceive his soul and speed him on to perdition with a lie in his right hand. And with that holy fidelity which triumphs over natural feeling, Jesus gave the unwelcome reply ; the answer which sent away dejected and gloomy one who had run up to Him radiant with hope and eager to exhibit his reverential regard : teaching us that our love to our friends should never make us flatter their mistakes, nor deal falsely by their immortal interests.

Let us look for a little—

1. At those features in this young ruler's character which, as the Son of man, the Lord Jesus loved.

2. Those defects in this young man's character which, as the Son of God, the Lord Jesus detected and disclosed.

- I. 1. He was sound in his creed. At that period the fashionable religion in Palestine was a sort of

Materialism. Owing to their intercourse with Gentile nations, and partly a reaction from the hollow truisms and puerile inanities of the rabbies, a Hellenistic rage was at this time overspreading the refined circles in the Holy Land, and much useless trouble was taken to deck the truths of Revelation in the new costume. The consequence was, that many became ashamed of their old Hebrew book. The Bible was not sufficiently classical; and in certain coteries people began to talk about myths and Mosaic fables, and doubted if there were such a thing as an angel, or a soul distinct from the material frame, or any resurrection of the body. And amongst the young and the rich and the thoughtless, these opinions had amazing currency. They were new, and this recommended them to bold and dashing spirits. They put God and a future judgment out of the way, and that endeared them to the voluptuous and vicious,—to the jovial spirits, who shouted, “Let us crown ourselves with rose-buds and drench our garlands in wine; let us eat and drink, and be merry: for to-morrow we die and all is done.” And they had a show of wisdom. Leaving out of sight the sacred books, these Gentile writers were incomparably more clever, more profound, and more brilliant, than any who took the side of the ancient faith: and, as if to provoke every powerful understanding and every cultivated mind into this Sadducean free-thinking, the theologians and religious

teachers of the day rushed into the opposite extreme: and, to avoid the suspicion of Gentilism, dullness became the badge of orthodoxy and triteness the test of truth.

Now, from the first exclamation of this young man, any spectator might have gathered that he had not left the faith of his fathers: "What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" Contrary to the prevailing scepticism, he believed in the soul's immortality, and was anxious about his own destiny in the world to come. And that single utterance was a powerful prepossession in his favour. Knowing all the temptations to which he was exposed; knowing how often he must have run the gauntlet of derision and contempt; knowing how frequently he must have been bantered by his friends for his antiquated notions, and how many hints he must have had as to their mental weakness or moral cowardice who still frequented synagogues and said their prayers; knowing how at the tables of the gay and the genteel he must have been many times rallied for following the faith of some mother Eunice, or some "grandmother" Lois; knowing all the temptations to infidelity which encompassed a young man of his distinction, and hearing from his lips this confession of his faith, Jesus loved him for his orthodoxy.

And our youthful reader is to be congratulated if, like this ruler, he believes the Bible. Our times

are not wholly dissimilar. The world just now is full of vigorous thinkers; but few of these are firm believers. The press is teeming with fresh and wonderful books; books written in new styles, and either exhibiting new truths or drawing new and startling conclusions from familiar facts. And every man is sanguine as to the powers of his prescription—the success of his panacea: he is sure that his proposal is to carry the world's convictions and new-create society. But whilst the literature of the day is lifesome and bold and leonine; whilst, full of energy and self-reliance, it practises and prospers,—religion is too often tame and timid. It is not always that the pious books of the present day have the freshness and power of its secular publications. They look as if they only half believed the Bible; they are terrified to translate it; they dare not put new words on familiar truths; they are too often trite and commonplace; the echoes of an echo; the shadows of a shade. And in such times, when genius is so sceptical and faith so dull, there are strong temptations to a young and vigorous understanding to fall in with popular forms of unbelief. Few are so earnest that they will read a good book for the sake of its goodness, however tame the thought and however flat the style. And few can read brilliant books, from which religion is banished, or in which it is openly reviled, without carrying away the contagious damage.

And, therefore, in such times, and surrounded by such influences, we specially congratulate youthful and accomplished minds, if they have escaped the Sadducean pestilence. If you have learned to distinguish betwixt clear facts and clever fancies ; if along with the sentiment which admires the gorgeous colours of the evening sky, you possess the common sense which to a castle up among these clouds prefers a cottage on the plain ; if, amidst the ever-changing ideal you keep a steady grasp of the unchanging historical ; if, when the fashionable philosophy is springing up like the grass in summer, or picturesque theories are blossoming like the flowers of the season,—if you still remember, “ The grass withereth and the flower fadeth ; but the Word of the Lord endureth for ever,” we congratulate you on the wisdom of your conclusion and the security of your position. And still more would we wish you joy, if these convictions are so strong that you do not scruple to declare them ; if, amidst thoughtless companions or open scoffers, you do not disguise nor disavow your persuasion ; if the scorner’s laugh do not deter you from the sanctuary, nor make you ashamed of pious parents and a praying home ; if you have never felt it brave to be a blasphemer, nor dastardly to fear the Lord. Such convictions and such conquests over unbelief are the gift of God ; blessings for which, so far as they go, you should be very grateful, and beauties of character

such as, embodied in this young ruler, the Saviour loved.

2. But more than this, he was a moral man. Jesus repeated to him the commandments, "Do not commit adultery, do not kill, do not steal, do not bear false witness," &c., and he could answer, "All these have I kept from my infancy up." Doubtless, that answer showed that he had still to learn the purity and heart-pervasiveness of God's law; but it showed how much decorum and decency had marked his outward conduct. His conscience did not reproach him with any great and outstanding transgression; he had never embezzled money intrusted to his keeping; he had never enriched himself by defrauding others; he had never, to his knowledge, told a lie; he had never slandered nor falsely accused a companion; and there was no dark day in his history to which reluctant memory was ever and anon reverting,—no gloomy day, in which some guilty secret lay entombed, and from which he dreaded it might spring in sudden and ghastly resurrection. But over his general and world-ward conduct his eye could glide with prevailing satisfaction; and so far as society went, he moved about a fearless and unembarrassed man, grasping every proffered hand sincerely, looking trustfully into every cordial countenance, with no dread of stumbling into pits which himself had digged, or startling the ghosts of buried crimes; regard-

ing the Cities of Refuge as humane asylums for his less fortunate fellows, and the trespass-offerings as a gracious provision for the sinful multitude ; nor perhaps altogether without a mixture of that self-complacency which says, " God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican."

Reader, can you say as much? Have you this young man's outward morality and freedom from common sins? Or are you one of those, who, hoping to " do " some good thing, so as to inherit eternal life, " fall short of one, who, after all, fell short of heaven?"

3. But the young ruler was more than correct. There was something very captivating in his character. Some persons are blameless, but they have about them nothing beautiful. You cannot point out their faults, but you are conscious of no fascination in them. But with this young man it was entirely different; and with that suggestive profusion which marks the pencil of these evangelist-artists, we can detect even in this rapid sketch much that is graceful and gainly. You see him frank, courageous, and unaffected. Jesus is passing on his way, and, fearful of missing his opportunity, and absorbed by his own earnestness, he thinks nothing of posting along the road and running quickly up, forgetful of the solemn gait which befits exalted station. And

with the same inadvertency to appearances,—with the same free and manly expression of his respectful and reverential feelings, you see him kneeling down as he accosts the Saviour; and you cannot fail to notice the cordiality as well as courtesy of his address,—his confidence in Christ's wisdom and benevolence as he hails Him, "Kind Teacher, Good Master." And the whole interview leaves on your mind an impression of urbanity, politeness, just sentiment, and natural feeling, open-hearted gentleness, and engaging suavity: all confirmed when we read that Jesus, when He looked on him, loved him.

And so may there be those amongst us, who are extremely amiable, but yet who lack the one thing. You are mild in your temper, and gentle in your movements. You like to do obliging things, and make those around you happy. And people love you. They cannot help admiring your faultless conduct, and feeling grateful for your kind attentions. And everything you do is dutiful; you are so correct and obedient, so diligent and self-denying, and so exemplary, that even pious friends might be ready to ask, What does he lack? But were you kneeling before the heart-searching Saviour, like this interesting youth,—are you sure that He would see no lack? Would He not see a heart quite cold to God? heedless about Him or absolutely hating Him? Would He not see a heart quite filled with other

things, and not even a corner kept for Himself? Would He not see a heart set upon people's praise or people's love, but never caring for the praise and the love of God? As Boston says, "Many are the devil's lions, filling the place where they live with the noise of their revels and riotings; but this young man was one of the devil's lambs, going to hell without letting the world hear the sound of his feet."

4. He was a religious inquirer. He was in earnest about his soul. He had evidently been turning the subject over in his mind. He was not entirely satisfied with himself. Notwithstanding his morality, he felt that there was something awanting. He did not feel as if he were yet inheriting eternal life. His religion did not satisfy himself. And in the hope that the missing secret might be revealed, and the painful want supplied, he determined on consulting Jesus. And he carried his intention explicitly out. He did not steal an interview, nor come, like Nicodemus, disguised and through the dark: but on the patent road and in the public day, in the presence of others, and most likely with the knowledge of some of his neighbours, he hasted to the feet of Jesus, and put his momentous question openly.

+ Have you ever inquired? Have you ever taken a thought about your soul and its everlasting salvation? Have you ever said to yourself, 'Well, it is a very serious matter this, to have a soul which must

soon be in heaven or hell for ever. True, I am young, and summer days are bright, and I am fond of pastime, and I have some important work on hand. But my soul? How can I find balm in the breath of June—how can I find cheerfulness in my work or pleasure in my play, so long as my soul is perishing? And, let me see, my Bible says, “Except ye be converted—except ye be born again, ye cannot enter the kingdom of heaven.” But I doubt if I am converted. I am sure that I am not born again. How am I to come at it? How shall I find salvation? How shall I ever get to heaven?’

— We have now seen what there was interesting and attractive about this young ruler. He was sound in his creed. At a time when throughout Palestine most of the refined and fashionable people were free-thinkers and Sadducees, he was a believer in revelation, and firm in the only faith. And he was correct in his conduct. Free from flagrant crimes, he had outwardly fulfilled the various commands, and could answer to each in succession, All these have I kept. And there was in his character and dispositions much that was captivating and prepossessing. Frank, affable, and courteous, it was fine to see a ruler so humble, and a young man so thoughtful. For this gave additional charm to all his other features,—he was a religious inquirer, and really in earnest about his soul’s salvation.

And as there you see the noble youth kneeling at Messiah's feet, you are ready to exclaim, 'O, blessed Jesus, deal gently with the lad! Deal gently with him for his own sake and for Thine! He is young and amiable, and the world still smiles on him: do not scare him away with that formidable cross. Look at him, and confess if Thou dost not love him? Is he not engaging? and would he not prove to Thyself a companion more congenial, and an associate more intelligent than these rude fishermen? And is he not a ruler? Would there not be a sanction in his support, and an asylum in his friendship? and would it not annihilate the taunt, Have any of the rulers believed on Him? And is he not rich? With such a disciple in Thy retinue, Thou needst never say again, "The foxes have holes," for every mansion in Jewry would be open to Thee then? And is he not refined? and might not men of rank—might not many rulers and rich men be brought to believe through the influence of such a minister?'

No; there is only one path to the kingdom. There is not one salvation for the rich and another for the poor; there is not one cross for the noble and another for the fisherman. Nothing but a new heart will enter heaven: and in this affecting instance the Saviour has taught us that whether encased in the most repulsive depravity, or encircled with all the

charms of a well-spent youth, a carnal mind cannot enter the kingdom.

II. In a moment, and by His Divine intuition, the Lord Jesus saw how it stood with this inquirer. He knew far better than the man himself the state of his inmost soul. And though the youth imagined that his desire of salvation was supreme, Jesus saw that it was only secondary, and brought clearly out these two things—1. That he had no right knowledge of sin; and 2. No sufficient desire for the favour and enjoyment of God.

1. First of all, the Saviour went over the leading commands, and to these the young man unhesitatingly answered that he had kept them all. He did not mean to deceive, and Jesus loved him none the less for his honest but erroneous answer. It was true according to his own understanding of these precepts, but that he should understand them in such a meagre sense was a proof how callous was his conscience, and how defective his spiritual apprehension. Had that apprehension been more correct, and that conscience more tender, he would have known that the thought of wickedness is sin; and he would have felt that the imagination of his heart had been only evil continually; and that life on which he plumed himself as a succession of virtues would have darkened into a sad series of sins. He would have been in the situation which the Apostle Paul afterwards so graphically

described as his own. Like a man in a pestilent season who is told that the plague-spot has appeared on his countenance, and he feels so well that he will not believe it. However, being told to look into the glass, for a moment he glances into a dim mirror, or a mirror in a dusky chamber, and protests that he can see nothing wrong. But his informant comes in, and pulls open a shutter, and lets in a clearer light, or brushes the dust from the face of the mirror; and lo! large and livid on his darkening brow the sentence of approaching death. Saul, the moralist, once would not believe that there was aught amiss in his character. He felt alive and well, and trusted that he was good enough to be going to heaven. He looked into the law, and like this young man, declared sincerely, "All these have I kept." But whilst he was still gazing into the dusty glass, and saying to himself, 'I am whole and need no physician,' of a sudden the Spirit of God let in a flood of light, and at the same moment the tenth commandment brushed the film from the face of the mirror, and shewed him swarms of evil thoughts and unholy wishes; and oh! what an altered man he saw himself. What a leprous and plague-stricken soul he saw his own to be! What a doomed and death-stricken spirit he felt it! And how when that one commandment came, sin was vivified; his real character was revealed, and the self-justifying legalist "died!"

But when the Saviour sent this youth to the mirror, the dust was on it, and the room was dark. With perfect sincerity, but sadly mistaking, he reported, "All these have I kept." And this fatal error frustrated all the rest. Feeling no need of an atoning sacrifice, or a Divine forgiveness, there was no reason why he should take up the cross and follow Jesus. He was not, to his own sensations at least, one of those lost ones, whom the Friend of Sinners came to seek and to save.

And doubtless, it still is this which makes many stop short of the Saviour. They see no sin in themselves; or, at all events, no sin that is damnable. They allow that they are infirm and imperfect, and that, like all other people, they have their faults and their short-comings. But anything so atrocious as to merit the Divine displeasure, they deprecate and disown, for, honestly, they cannot discover it.

† The young man was aware of no short-coming, no transgression; and, although the first table of the law had next been held up, he could have viewed himself in it with equal complacency. Such is the deceitfulness of sin, and such is the deadness of conscience till quickened by the Spirit of God! But, suppose that at this point it had flashed on his conviction, 'All these have I misunderstood and mismanaged from my youth. I have kept them not to God but to myself. My good deeds have been put together

like so many dead and disjointed sticks to make rounds in a ladder that would reach up to heaven ; they have not grown like green branches spontaneous and beautiful from a living tree, the root of which was love to God and my neighbour. I have been a mere selfist, living for men's praise, living for my own interest or indulgence ; and if God has been sometimes in my thoughts He has been seldom in my heart : He has been to me the hard task-master instead of the dear Father and the gracious Sovereign ; and, whilst He has been shut out from my heart, I have tried to propitiate Him by a quit-rent handed forth from the window, by a few good words spoken in prayer, a few coins given away in alms or cast into the treasury. O Master, canst thou replace the living — God in a worldling's soul ? Is there any pardon for my long impiety ? Canst thou teach me to love the Lord God with all my heart and mind ?' Suppose that this had been the bitter cry awakened by his conscious emptiness, he was now in the presence of one who could abundantly comfort. He had come to consult one who could not only pardon the past, but in whose society he might soon have recovered the lost secret of Paradise, and learned to delight in the living God as a Father and a Friend. Nay, little as he surmised it, that "good Master" was Himself the 'good God,' and in following Jesus, frequenting His society, listening to His words, imbibing His dispo-

sitions, he would have been daily more and more weaned from self-seeking and self-dependence, and would have been trained and educated back again into that filial spirit which was the spirit of unfallen Adam, and which is eternal life already begun in the soul.

2. Having failed by His question to reveal to his visitor the plague of his own heart, the Saviour told him to do a thing which would shew him the strength of his besetting sin. The Saviour first held up the mirror of the commands that he might see himself guilty; He now touched the chain of his peculiar carnality, that he might perceive himself a slave and a prisoner. Amidst all his amiability and engaging attributes the Lord Jesus knew that he was worldly-minded. He had his treasure on earth. He was not so intent on God's friendship that he would give up all things for it; but he had so much thoughtfulness and foresight, that along with an earthly present, he desired a heavenly future; he would like the pleasures of sense now, and the joys of glory in reversion. And he hoped that perhaps the Great Teacher might put him on a plan for combining both. But aware of his propensity Jesus said at once, "One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross and follow me." 'You want to inherit eternal life. Well, the way to

inherit it is to begin it here. Make God your highest good and chiefest joy, and your eternal life is begun already. But you are not doing that. Your treasure is not in heaven, but here; your treasure is your farm and your fine estate. God is saying to you, My son, give me thine heart; but you give that heart to your property. These great possessions are your god. You live and move for them, and your being is bound up in them. Can you part with them, and take God for your portion? Can you live by faith? Canst thou sell all that thou hast; and like myself and my followers live on the daily providence of God? "Sell whatsoever thou hast!" The thing was not to be thought of. Treasure in heaven was good, but treasure on earth was indispensable. So, grieved at the sentence, sorry that the terms were so severe, sorry that the response of Jesus was so plain and so absolute; sorry to have all the hopes of the past and the plans of that morning dashed by one hard saying, he slowly turned him round and "went away."

Went away! He *came* running. His steps were light and eager then; for he almost hoped that he was about to find the pearl of great price, and that that very day he might carry salvation back to his house. But all that was over now; and sure we are he was not running when he went away. The woman at Jacob's well *ran* when she hasted to tell her neighbours that she had found the Christ; but the

neighbours who saw the ruler wending back to his abode, might see that he had lost something. Yes! he had lost his day of grace. He had lost his golden opportunity for obtaining eternal life. If he had known the gift of God, and who it was that said to him, Sell what thou hast, he would have done it on the spot, and on the spot Jesus would have given him treasure in heaven. But that opportunity was gone. Jesus returned to that region no more. He was going to Jerusalem. He was travelling to the Cross. His earthly journeys were well-nigh ended, and that particular road He should traverse no more. Ah, no! amiable but misguided young man! The moment is passed. Jesus has gone one way, and thou hast gone another; and ere noon the Friend of sinners will be far from these domains. But surely thou never canst forget the interview of this morning. When thou art grown old and miserly, when thou hast lost the simplicity and warmth which for the present redeem thy worldliness, and when no friends are near thee except on-hangers scrambling for thy great possessions, perhaps thou mayest recall this morning, and sigh to think that a Friend in heaven and treasure there were once within thine offer! And sure enough thou wilt remember it one day. There were no prints in His hands and feet with whom thou didst part this morning, nor was there any crown upon His brow. But there will be when thou seest

Him again. That Jesus who passed near thy house this morning will be the crucified, the glorified, when next He meets thine eyes ; and He who this morning loved thee as the Son of Man, will that day judge thee as the Son of God. By that time thou shalt be where great possessions cannot profit, but where the bargains of time cannot be recalled. The man Christ Jesus looked at thee lovingly this morning ; but how will Jehovah the Judge look at thee then ? at the man who had salvation in his offer, but refused it ? at the man who preferred a few acres of earth to treasure in heaven ? at the man who chose to have all his good things below ? at the man who, when the Saviour said, " Follow me," went away ?

1. From this affecting history we see how far people may go, and yet fall short of heaven. This youth was orthodox, moral, and engaging ; but he lacked one thing : he lacked the new heart ; he lacked that lowly mind which sees its guilt and vileness ; that trustful mind which is ready to forsake all and follow Jesus ; that renovated mind to which righteousness is meat and drink, and the sense of God's favour the chiefest joy.

And perhaps our young reader may have gone as far. You are correct and well conducted ; you pray, and read the Bible. Your friends see your sweetness of disposition and the mildness of your manners ; but do you love the Lord Jesus ? Have you intrusted

to Him your soul's salvation? Are you ready to part with anything which He bids you renounce? And are you so devoted to His service, that you are not ashamed to be known as His disciple, as a member of His Church, and as a separatist from a sinful world? Are you willing to take up the cross and follow Christ?

✕ 2. And you see how wise it is to abandon at once anything which hinders your salvation. There may be money in the purse, and yet no idolatry of money in the heart. Abraham, and David, and Daniel had "great possessions," and yet they got to heaven; and, after this, Cornelius and the Ethiopian treasurer, and Gaius, and Joseph of Arimathea, in "entering the kingdom," took their riches along with them, and used them profitably in the service of their Saviour and their brethren. But the Lord Jesus saw that the plague of this ruler's heart was avarice, or the worship of wealth. He saw that he was in the bond of the same iniquity which made Demas go back to the world, and which turned Lot's wife into a pillar of salt. And, not because there is anything sinful in property, but because to this avaricious youth his property would prove a perpetual snare—because, in his case, to part with it would be the surest sign of his present sincerity and the greatest help to his future consistency, the Lord Jesus insisted on its entire and instant surrender.

In like manner, whatever stands in the way of your salvation, be it something positively sinful, or something lawful idolised, that is the thing which the Lord Jesus bids you abandon. There is nothing sinful in music; but we have read of instances where music was a mania; where, like a possession, it carried its victims to all company, however unsuitable, and detained them at all hours, however unreasonable; and when they became supremely anxious about the "one thing," they found it needful to enforce a rigid abstinence from their favourite enjoyment. There is nothing sinful in a little wine, but if that little create a wish for more, and the man finds that his growing love for strong drink will stand betwixt him and the hope of salvation, he would be a wise man never to taste it again so long as the world standeth. And whatever it be which you find the great obstacle to Christian decision,—play-going, novel-reading, frivolous company, the race-course, the ball-room, the card-table,—we shall not now dispute about its abstract lawfulness; we only ask, Is that habit so powerful, that even for Christ and for heaven you cannot give it up? Is that propensity so strong, that this day, when the Saviour says, "Arise, and follow me," you cannot comply, because something else has a stronger hold upon you, and compels you to go away exceeding sorrowful?

A Young Man who left all and followed Jesus.

ON the western side of the Lake of Galilee there was a cluster of thriving little villages; and although the inhabitants did not depend entirely on the lake for their subsistence, yet most of them were at least occasionally fishermen. Amongst the rest there was a good man who was better off than some of his fellow-townsmen; for he not only had a craft of his own, but could hire servants to man it; and we afterwards find that members of his family were acquainted with the best society in Jerusalem. In his substantial and comfortable abode this worthy citizen had a pious wife called Salome, and two sons whose names were James and John. It is a short sketch of the younger which we here purpose to give.

We know little of his early days, but they would doubtless resemble the early days of neighbour-children. He would launch his tiny skiff on the waters of the lake, and would deem it grand promotion when allowed to go out with the men in the

pinnacle. In all the pride of conscious usefulness, he would bail out the water, and bait the hooks, and the first time that his own line quivered with a scaly captive, he would hurry it up hand over hand, and flush with elation as it jumped and floundered in the hold--the fairest and most precious of fishes. And by and by he felt it romantic to spend the whole night on the water, furling the sail on that eerie eastern shore; and as he lay watching the buoys in the moonlight, he would sometimes hear the howl of the wolf, or the laugh of the hyæna up among the tombs, or would see capering along the coast the frantic demoniac. But the Sabbath came, and not a sail was stirring on all those peaceful waters. It was the day which God had made, and it was given to devotion. With his father, and mother, and brother, John went to the synagogue, and listened to some rabbi expounding the Law, and was sometimes promoted to read a long passage himself to the village assembly. And when that service was ended, he came home, and either under the fig-tree or in the alcove on the top of the house, gazing away over the green acres on towards the snowy peaks of Hermon, he allowed his imagination to wander at will. And though we do not know what led to it, we know that the youth began to think about his soul. Perhaps it was the conversation of his pious mother, whose spirit was intent on the consolation of Israel; perhaps it was

the striking scenes he witnessed in his first journey to Jerusalem—the scape-goat, the paschal lamb, and the daily sacrifice, and all that great dramatic sermon on the subject of sin and atonement which in the Holy City Jehovah preached to his peculiar people. But, at all events, the youth grew thoughtful. He had committed no gross or open crime, and yet he felt himself none the less a sinner. And hearing that a great preacher had appeared in the south country, John set out to attend his ministry.

When he came to the spot he found a great concourse. Indeed, with its long-robed lawyers and its steel-clad soldiers; with its silken ladies and its swarthy boors; with its tents, and its hucksters, and its sumpter-asses, the place looked like a great civic encampment, or a town turned out on the meadows. As he crossed the ferry, and pushing up through the oleanders and sedges joined the crowd beside the river, the young pilgrim was arrested by a conspicuous figure,—a meagre weather-beaten man, with head uncovered, and with a mantle of coarse camel's hair. The throng hung enchained on his thrilling tones, and stood revealed to his bright flashing eye. He was proclaiming the near approach of Messiah, and was putting it to his audience if they were really prepared for the arrival of one so holy and so divine—one who would only gather wheat into His garner, and from the flap of whose winnowing-fan hypocrisy

would fly away like chaff from the tempest. And as he marshalled up the ten commands, each bodied forth into a stern accuser, and shook its head so ominously that self-complacency sunk back into itself, and the gayest trifler was fain to cry, "O God, be merciful to me a sinner!" Prodigious is the force of earnest words. Hardly yet had the Holy Ghost been given; but such was the mastery over men imparted to the Baptist by loyalty to God and outspoken fearlessness, that frivolity grew serious and pride crest-fallen. And, as a confession of the polluted past and a promise of a holier future, there was hardly one who did not pass through the cleansing ordeal, and entering by the door of water-baptism, assume an expectant attitude towards the approaching kingdom.

To understand the sequel, we may assume that John even now possessed those attributes of character which he afterwards abundantly exhibited—a contemplative turn, candour, and acquaintance with Scripture. There is a certain delicacy of scriptural allusion, a certain dexterity in quoting it, which, just like the choice idioms and elegant felicities of a man speaking his native tongue rather than one acquired late in life, betoken a deep and early acquaintance with the books of the Bible; and in such profound quotations and recondite allusions John's writings abound, giving us reason to believe that in his Gali-

lean home he had studied betimes Moses and the prophets.* And what he perused he pondered. He was a man of meditation—a man to whom thought was an enjoyment—reflection and reasoning the repose of his spirit. But though a thinker, he was not constitutionally a sceptic. Without prejudice, and without precipitation, he had a mind prepared to yield to evidence—that frank and limpid nature, through which, as through the clear fountain or the crystal window, the rays of truth find ready transit.

With this Bible knowledge, this thoughtfulness, this candour, it was hardly possible for John to hearken to the Baptist without being deeply convinced of his lost estate, and without listening eagerly to what the speaker added about that Greater than himself, who was coming to take away the sin of the world. On a Gentile, or an ignorant Jew, the words might have fallen pointless; but in the alert spirit of John they touched a hundred chords, and awakened countless echoes; and his whole nature was in that stir of expectation which precedes a moral revolution, when one day, wistfully gazing at a stranger who seemed to be passing by, the Baptist exclaimed, "Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world!" and, impelled by some Divine attraction, the young Galilean and his companion

* See the "Four Witnesses" of Da Costa, (a most profound and æsthetic analysis of the characteristics of the four evangelists), pp. 265-7.

followed, and joyfully embracing the invitation which Jesus gave them, tarried all night beneath the roof where He at that time sojourned.

We love to recall our first interview with a great benefactor, or with the friend who has formed a chief ingredient in our earthly happiness : but no such date can be so memorable as a man's first acquaintance with his Saviour. And yet it is characteristic of this apostle's retiring disposition and sensitive nature, that of all which transpired on that memorable evening, he has not recorded one syllable. A little later, he tells us what passed in a similar interview with Nicodemus ; and as far as relates to God's love to the world, and the lifting up of the Son of Man, it is likely that what was said to John and his companion was substantially the same. And though we confess to disappointed curiosity, though it would have been not a little instructive to know what were the words which first satisfied an intellect so superior, and which first arrested a heart so loving, we must be satisfied with the result which was next morning announced to their friends in words so few but emphatic, " We have found the Messiah."

And here we cannot forbear a parenthetical observation. Some natures are effusive and outspoken. When they find the lost sheep, or the lost shekel, they call on their friends and neighbours to share the joy, and they cannot rest till they have relieved their

grateful emotion by crying, "All ye that love the Lord, come and I will declare what He hath done for my soul." Like John Newton, they cannot forbear, but they must tell to every hearer what miracles of mercy they are, and they write a book to record how they were snatched from the fearful pit and the miry clay: whilst others, no less affected by God's goodness, feel with Cowper—

"Nor were it wise, nor should I choose
Such secrets to declare ;
Like precious wines, their taste they lose
Exposed to open air."

Like John, they shrink from publicity; and it is not by telling to the Church, or even to their friends, the story of their conversion, but it is by the way they speak and act for Christ, that the world is apprised of their great discovery, and the consequent revolution in their characters.

And this, we believe, is all which even the Church is entitled to demand. For whilst, on the one hand, there may be an explicitness which is aught but egotism—whilst to a frank and exuberant spirit it may feel like coldness or cowardice to conceal the doing of the Lord, another may revolt from any recital of his own experience as verging on vain-glory, or as a self-exhibition at once unseemly and distasteful. And if we are thankful to Paul, who repeats again and again the incidents of his conver-

sion, the example of John may teach us that we are not entitled to constitute ourselves fathers-confessors, and force into a full and particular statement of their experience those who would rather "keep the matter in their heart."

John went back to Bethsaida. He went back to Zebedee and the fishing boat—to his old friends and his former avocation; and had Christ not summoned him to a higher calling, he would have done well to abide as he was to the end of his days. And, with the consciousness which he now possessed, John might have led on that lake of Galilee an existence happier and more sublime than Seneca was then spending in his cedar library, or Tiberius in his glittering palace. "The mind is its own place;" and just as shabby notions and mean projects may nestle beneath a coronet, so heaven's heir-apparent is sometimes attired in coarsest raiment, and is holding fellowship with God even when it is a sorry employment in which his fingers are engaged. And should the reader be one whose outward lot is little in unison with his intellectual or moral aspirations—like John after that night with Jesus at Bethabara, should you be obliged to return to a companionship as contracted and to a calling as irksome as awaited the young disciple on Genesareth:—remember that John and a few friends like-minded have thrown around the once obscure lake of Galilee and the humble craft of the

fisherman associations almost amounting to sacredness: and if your vocation is too lowly to elevate you, be you yourself so conscientious, so pure and noble-hearted, so full of Christ, as to leave that calling the more dignified because it is the one which you once occupied.

But John was not destined to tarry many months amongst his old neighbours and their work. Although it is well for us that there is One who foresees all our future and who knows the way which we take, it is well for us that we do not know it ourselves: and so, by short and gentle stages, with seldom more than one trial in any single vista, and usually with many sweet beguilements by the way, we are lured along till our generation is served and the work which God has given us is done. At the moment when Jesus called himself and his brother, could it have been revealed to John, 'He is calling you to sixty years of wandering and exile. Bethsaida will never more be your home. He is calling you to poverty and reproach. You will never be able to add another mite to your patrimony, and you will often be treated as an impostor or a fool. If you quit this boat and follow that man, you will land in a prison and on a rock of lonely banishment: I will not say but you may find yourself at last in the tyrant's gripe, flung into the seething caldron or shut up in the lions' den:—we dare not say that he would have been so

daunted as to refuse to go, but he would have gone with a very different feeling from that which now bore him over the vessel's side, and placed him a recruit instant and joyful in Messiah's little retinue. No—those days beside the Jordan and that night in Christ's own dwelling, were still vivid to his memory, and the hope of others like them was a spell before which home-ties dissolved and danger disappeared: and, in the kind wisdom of the Master, fresh excitements and new requitals so succeeded one another; and in the disclosures of a more intimate communion, the great original motive—love to Christ—so deepened, that John was never tempted for a moment to regret that day's decision. He heard the sermon on the Mount. He saw Jairus' daughter raised to life, and the widow's son at Nain. He helped to feed with the miraculous loaves the famished multitude. He shared, in some degree, the love and gratitude which gathered round his Master as the Healer of diseases, and the Forgiver of sins. He was with Jesus on the Holy Mount. He was with Him in the guest-chamber. He was with Him in Gethsemane. He was with Him in the hall of the palace of his friend the high-priest. He was with Him upon Calvary: in the upper room: on Olivet. And after the Saviour had gone hence, the mother of Jesus was still with John. And then, though persecution came, Pentecost was also come; and though

Jesus was gone, the Holy Ghost was given. And though sorrow came after sorrow—though James was slain with the sword, and though Jerusalem, with all its endearments, had to be left behind, yet success followed success, and Ephesus, and Smyrna, and Thyatira, “Gaius, mine host,” and Demetrius, were antidotes to overmuch sorrow, and incentives to renewed exertion;—even as it will be with ourselves, when God calls us to any great or good undertaking. Could we realise beforehand the opposition, the obloquy, the fatigue, the misconstruction, the wakeful nights, the weary, jaded days—were the real difficulties present to our mind in all their force, we should be very apt to linger in the boat and continue mending our nets, even after Jesus had said, “Arise, follow me.” But these trials are, in great mercy, hidden at the moment when the one mighty motive is working; and when they do arise, they so alternate with gracious encouragements—when one friend gives way, another is so opportunely raised up; when the home-scene is dark, such good news comes from elsewhere; when some effort proves abortive on which prodigious pains were expended, such unaccountable success crowns another, that, like the soldier who in the morning’s victory forgets the rainy bivouac of last night, and all his projects of returning, the chivalrous believer resumes the fight, and, like John in his long campaign of seventy years, is always

committing himself to new labours of love, "faint, yet pursuing;" and when he drops at last, his attitude is onward, and his position where he falls is in advance of the ground where he rested yesterday.

When Noah lifted the hatch, and looked out at the window of his ark, he saw quite another world from that which he had looked upon when God shut the door and closed him in. It was a world where he would meet none of his old neighbours—where the old subjects of engrossing speculation would have ceased to interest—where the old scenes would wear a new aspect—where old things were passed away, and all things were become new. Noah had seen an old world die, and a new world born.

When John took his last look from the craggy heights of Patmos, he was a patriarch gazing from the summit of a moral Ararat. It was not that outward nature had made a change; for the evening sun wheeled gloriously down on the far western waves, and the mighty Mediterranean still swept his azure billows along the bleak ribs of Patmos, or went to sleep on the snowy sands of its sheltered bay. With its garland of glossy green, the Christmas rose still crowned the rocks where the sea-gull nestled, as it had crowned them centuries ago; and the ships of Tarshish were seen glancing and tacking in the far offing, as they had done when Jonah was the passenger, and Hiram was the sailor king. All these things

continued as they were when the fathers fell asleep ; but other things were changed. Had the apostle's eye been keen enough to penetrate so far, from the top of the rock he might have seen Jerusalem a desolate heap—those streets which, when first he trod them, stirred and buzzed with countless myriads, abandoned to the vulture, and the beautiful temple a pile of smashed pillars and scorched timbers, rendering the old ritual of Solomon and Moses a desperate impossibility. Northward he might have looked, and his own seven churches would have risen to his view ; and westward Corinth with its Christian congregations, and Rome with its saints in Cæsar's household. With scarce a land that did not contain its Christian worshippers, with scarce a tongue in which the name of Jesus had not been proclaimed, with that old dispensation departed, and with the idols of heathendom trembling in every shrine—in that destruction of guilty and doomed Jerusalem, in that infeasibility already taken in His purchased heritage, the heathen—John felt that, if this were not all the coming of his Master which he had reason to expect, it was all for which the disciple could patiently wait ; and, with old associations revived by these apocalyptic visions, and old affections burning afresh, he wished that his dear Lord would come and take him to Himself. “ Even so, come, Lord Jesus ; come quickly.”

We do not know the particulars of John's dying hours. Early church history tells us that it was a peaceful death. He did not die a martyr, as his own brother did. No Herod spilled his blood. We do not know the place. Like Moses' grave, no man knows for certain where he is buried to this day. Nor are we told who surrounded his dying bed. There is only one Friend who we know for certain was there. And, reader, if you be a disciple, Jesus will be at your bedside when you come to die. It may be in a Patmos—a land of distance or exile; or an Ephesus—a place where Christian friends will come to see you, and where the congregation in which you were wont to worship will remember you when it meets to pray. It may be in a quiet chamber, where loving relatives stand by; or in a lonely unplenished room, where a kind neighbour looks in now and then to see if you are wanting anything. Salome and James may have gone before; your mother and your brethren may no longer be with you: but, whoever dies, the Lord Jesus lives; and if you be His disciple, you will not depart in solitude. Jesus will be with you. And once you have fallen asleep, your very dust will not be neglected nor forgotten. The Saviour will watch over it till that bright morrow when He shall draw the blue curtain of these skies, and, revealing a sun which never sets, shall arouse you all recruited for the sleepless services of eternity.

There were many fishermen on the Lake of Galilee, and many young men in the village of Bethsaida, who never became Christ's disciples. And there was once a time when nothing was further from the thoughts of John. When Salome dandled him on her knee; when, with his older brother and the neighbour children, he played up and down the steep street of Bethsaida; when, in the winter months, he left the village to look at the swellings of Jordan, as, in volumes of foaming ochre, it rolled and tumbled into the flooded lake; and when, a limber lad, he shoved afloat the boat of Zebedee, grating along the gravel, and then leaped in and dealt out the net, and laid him down to be rocked asleep on the swinging waves;—amongst all his dreams he never dreamed of a day which would see him a fisher of men, and one of the dearest friends of Messiah. But that same Saviour who said to John, "Arise, follow me," invites you, dear young reader, to become His disciple. Be you as ingenuous, as obedient, as prompt, and as loving, and you too will become as lovely, as beloved. It is a wonderful invitation, but it is real. It comes from that Saviour who is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever;" and it is an invitation which is echoed in the last words of this happy evangelist, who closes the canon of Scripture entreating all to come and share the blessedness which he had never wholly lacked since the day that he first

beheld "the Lamb of God." The Saviour invites you to arise and follow Him ; and, amidst all the possibilities opened to you in that high calling, do you pray and aspire to become "a beloved disciple." Like John, who, amidst the confidential communings of the guest-chamber, the affectionate homage of the seven churches, the transporting revelations of Patmos, could remember the day when the scaly planks of a fishing-boat were his bed, and a coil of dripping ropes was his pillow, and when he had few hopes or aspirations beyond his native village,—you know not what great things you are yet to see. But of all spectacles the greatest is Jesus himself. That sight, dwelt upon by John's adoring and absorbing eyes, filled his mind for the rest of life with a beatific vision of "God manifest," and it came out again in a character so elevated and beautiful, that the whole Church is now of the same mind with the Master: it loves the disciple whom Jesus loved, and recognises as the most Christlike of all Christ's friends, John the Divine.

Final Glimpses.

THE RISEN REDEEMER.

The Risen Redeemer.

THE great sacrifice had been offered. The Son of God had exclaimed, "It is finished," and had given up the ghost. Availing themselves of Pilate's permission, Joseph and Nicodemus had taken down the body of Jesus, and had deposited it in a tomb lately hewn out of the rock in Joseph's garden. It was the eve of the Sabbath, and the stars would soon be shining, after which no work could be done. Their arrangements were therefore hasty; but they took time to wrap round the precious remains a hundred pounds of spices, and then rolled a great stone to the door. The Jewish rulers suggested to Pilate, that perhaps the disciples might come and carry off the body; and to obviate this danger the stone was fastened with seals, and a Roman guard set over it.

That night passed on, and nothing transpired. The next day was hushed and holy—the most sacred of Israel's Sabbaths; and within and around the sepulchre all continued as calm and silent as the smokeless city. The Sabbath day passed over, and

soon after six at night certain women purchased some spices, and agreed to meet at the sepulchre early on the following morning. Joanna and some others were to prepare the perfumes; but before Joanna and her companions arrived, Mary the mother of James, and Mary Magdalene, and Salome, set out to explore the sepulchre. Probably they knew nothing of the guard, but they wished to know whether it were practicable to remove the great stone. But before they could arrive, there had been a mighty movement at the sepulchre. "There was a great earthquake; for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow, and for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men." As soon as they recovered from their consternation, the guard ran to the rulers; and in the meanwhile the female disciples drew near to the garden. As soon as they entered it, and whilst they were speculating how the stone might be moved away, to their consternation they perceived that it was already displaced, and the sepulchre was open. Instantly conjecturing that His enemies had removed the body, perhaps to insult and maltreat it, Mary Magdalene hasted off to give the alarm to Peter and John. Meanwhile, Mary the mother of James, and Salome, went forward and saw an angel in the form of a

young man, sitting on the right side of the tomb, who said to them, "Be not affrighted. Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen. He is not here. Behold the place where they laid him." "And go quickly and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead, and that he goeth before you into Galilee."

On hearing Magdalene's report, John and Peter instantly set out, and Magdalene along with them; but owing to their different routes they did not meet Salome and her companion returning. John outran Peter, and first reached the sepulchre: but whilst he was looking in Peter came up, and, with characteristic impetuosity, sprang in at once. There lay the napkin carefully folded, and the shroud disposed by itself; and it did not at all appear as if either friends or foes had hastily borne away the body. Peter and John went back to their own home, and Mary Magdalene was left alone in the garden. And thus left alone, she drew near, and with tears in her eyes looked into the sepulchre. There two angels were sitting—the one at the head, the other at the feet—where the body of Jesus had lain. She took them for two young men, and when they asked, "Woman, why weepest thou?" she answered, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him." Just then, turning round, a figure stood before her. Her eyes dim with weeping, she supposed it

was the gardener, and encouraged by the kind way he asked, "Why weepest thou? whom seekest thou?" she said, "Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away." But instantly, in tones which belonged to one voice only, the Stranger answered, "Mary!" and as she sank at His feet, He added, "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God." And before more words could pass, He disappeared and met Salome and the other Mary, and accosted them, "All hail;" and clasping His feet they worshipped Him, whilst He renewed the message of the angels, "Be not afraid: Go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee: there shall they see me."

That same morning He appeared to Peter, and in the afternoon, when two disciples—not apostles—were journeying to a town eight miles from Jerusalem, Jesus joined them. They were talking together, and as it was plain that their theme was a sad one, the Stranger asked what it was. They told Him that they had counted on Jesus of Nazareth as the Redeemer of Israel,—but that He had been slain three days ago: moreover, that to-day they had been greatly perplexed by a rumour that His tomb was empty, and that no one was there except angels, who said that He was alive again. A long discourse ensued, during

which the Stranger demonstrated out of the prophets that all this was the plan of God, and that these were precisely the sufferings through which Messiah should pass before He entered His glory. Whether it were that His attire or His aspect was somewhat different from what it used to be ; or whether the melancholy absorption of their thoughts prevented them from sufficiently noticing their new companion ; or whether—as seems hinted in the narrative—Jesus purposely held their eyes from recognising Him :—still they journeyed mile after mile, conscious only of their fellow-traveller's sanctity and marvellous insight to Scripture, till they reached their dwelling, and as He blessed their meal and broke the bread, their eyes were opened, and they knew Him : but before they could follow up the transporting discovery, He had “ceased to be seen of them”^{*}—He had vanished out of their sight. With news so surprising they sped all the sixty furlongs back to Jerusalem and told the Eleven, “The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared unto Simon, and to us.” That evening, as the Eleven were assembled in an upper room, with the doors securely fastened for fear of the Jews, Jesus stood in the midst and said, “Peace be unto you :”—but they shrieked out and held up their hands, as if in the presence of an apparition. But Jesus said, “Why are ye troubled ? Behold my hands and my feet that

^{*} ἄφαντος ἐγένετο ἀπ' αὐτῶν, Luke xxiv. 31.

it is I myself. Handle me and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have." And while they yet believed not for joy, He asked, "Have ye here any meat?" and when they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish, and of a honeycomb, He took it and did eat before them. He then reminded them—as He truly might—how often He had foretold His sufferings Himself, and how Messiah's temporary death had been predicted in the Prophets and the Psalms: "Thus it behoved Messiah to suffer, and to rise from the dead on the third day."

A week passed on before He was seen again. On the last occasion one apostle was absent; and though his brethren told him what a long and ample interview they had enjoyed with their risen Master, he sturdily refused to believe them. After all, it must have been an apparition, and "except I shall see in his hands the prints of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe." Next Sunday the apostles were met as before, with bolted doors, and this time Thomas was with them. Again Jesus stood in the midst, and after the salutation, "Peace be unto you," turning to Thomas, He said, "Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing." But yielding to the irresistible evidence, and overwhelmed with this token of

his heart-searching Master's omniscience, Thomas could only exclaim, "My Lord, and my God."

Most likely it was that same week that the apostles went into Galilee, as they had been directed to do; and here they probably had repeated interviews with their Master, and learned from His own lips many things concerning His kingdom. But only two of these Galilean interviews are recorded. The first was by the Lake of Gennesareth, early on a morning of that wonderful spring. Peter, and Thomas, and James, and John, and Nathanael the guileless, and two other disciples, were in a fishing craft. They had been very unsuccessful—for they had toiled all night and taken nothing. They were now nearing the shore, when they saw some one standing on the beach. He hailed them, and asked if they had any food. They answered, None. He bade them cast the net on the right side of the ship; which they had no sooner done, than they found it so full that they could not hoist it on board. With his own sure instinct, John said to Peter, "It is the Lord;" and no sooner was the truth suggested, than Peter plunged over the vessel's side, and swam the two hundred cubits to the shore. There they found a repast prepared, and there, as they had often done of old, on the margin of that same lake, these seven listened to the Master's words, as they brake their bread together. The other appearance in Galilee was on a mountain, perhaps

Tabor, perhaps the Mount of Beatitudes; **at** all events, a mountain where He had appointed to meet the eleven, and where, taking advantage of the appointment, five hundred brethren came together to see Him, of whom the greater part survived full twenty years, and were living when Paul wrote his first letter to the Church of Corinth. In that interview—most likely in private, and apart from the multitude—Jesus told His apostles that all power was given to Him in heaven and earth, and He bade them go and teach all nations whatsoever things He had commanded them, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, and He added, “Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.”

From Galilee the apostles were directed to return to Jerusalem. There, forty days after His resurrection, Jesus joined them, and led them out a favourite and familiar walk over the shoulder of Olivet as far as to Bethany. They crossed the brook Kedron; for the last time together they passed near Gethsemane; they came in sight of the house where Lazarus dwelt with his sisters Martha and Mary. But to all the incidents of that touching past, Jesus made no allusion. His discourse was of such great themes, as the coming of the Holy Spirit and the extension of God’s kingdom in the earth. An inquiry, as to whether He meant now to restore the Jewish monarchy, He discouraged; but bade the disciples

preach repentance and remission of sins to all nations. And as they, doubtless, felt their deplorable incompetency, He bade them tarry at Jerusalem till they received the promise of the Father; for "not many days hence ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost." And then—a last look of love, and a final blessing, and He was ascending from their midst; and anon, when the cloud had received Him, and the angels told them that no gaze of fondness could make Him visible again, they poured forth their adoration in an act of worship; and, slowly wending back to Jerusalem, and to that dear upper chamber, they began the life of faith, and sought to realise the promise, "Lo, I am with you alway."

On the wonderful sequel we cannot dwell. We must not now stay to relate how a few weeks converted into heroes and orators the ignorant boors and aimless fishermen of Galilee; and how, from the dim, cold cavern of Jewish sectarianism, they suddenly issued on the world the most original reformers, the most expansive philanthropists, the most fervent evangelists, which that world has ever seen; how, in the very streets where their Master had been slain not two months previously, they proclaimed His resurrection and His Messiahship; and the rulers beat them, and threatened them, but could not contradict their testimony, nor ventured to bring forward the Roman guards to confute them; how

they confirmed their avowal of Christ's resurrection, by submitting to tortures, and imprisonments, and fearful forms of death; and how God also confirmed their testimony; how, when they invoked the name of Jesus of Nazareth, lame men leaped up, and sick folk were healed; and how, in their great business of preaching a risen Christ, the Holy Spirit helped them, so that, whilst all the languages of earth became easy as their own vernacular, their thoughts glowed like lightning, and their words thawed like fire; how the first time they announced their great news, "Him whom with wicked hands ye crucified and slew, God hath raised up, and hath made Him Lord and Christ," the incidents all were recent, the immediate scene was only a few hundred paces distant, and their hearers had many of them been spectators of the crucifixion, but three thousand at once became the converts of the Crucified; and all throughout, till, on the road to Damascus, Jesus arrested His greatest persecutor, and changed him into His most ardent devotee, how all the intervening incidents proclaimed a risen and enthroned Redeemer, we must not at present detail more fully; but shall conclude by indicating some of the results which follow from Christ's Resurrection.

1. It was as our Surety that Jesus died and was buried; and it was as our Surety that Jesus rose. His resurrection proves that His atoning work had served

its purpose, and that the great Redemption was complete. The wages of sin was death. On behalf of His people, Jesus had tasted death ; and now, as there was nothing more to pay, the prison was opened and the Surety was released. "God raised Him from the dead," and in thus raising to life the Substitute of the elect, God openly acknowledged that their debt was discharged—their penalty exhausted—their expiation complete. It might have been otherwise. We speak of things that are strong : There is nothing stronger than justice. We speak of things that are heavy : There is nothing heavier than guilt. And had Jesus been a human Saviour, He would have been crushed by the responsibilities He assumed, and must have perished in His benevolent undertaking. The sins of any one of us would have been a gravestone too heavy for Him to heave off : the claims of Jehovah's justice would have been bands of death too strong for even Him to burst. But before He descended to the tomb Messiah had finished transgression and made an end of sin. There was nothing to take Him thither, except the Scripture which must be fulfilled, and the last enemy which must be destroyed ; and except the great stone and the pontifical seals, there was nothing to keep Him there. Vainly did the King of Terrors watch over his strange captive, and vainly did the Grave boast of its mysterious and mighty inmate. He opened His eyes and

Death was abolished: He stood up, and the Grave had lost its victory; and yielding to the touch of Heaven's herald, the seals and the great stone gave way, and Jesus was "declared the Son of God with power in His resurrection from the dead." Delivered for our offences, He was raised again for our justification: and along with Him rose all His ransomed—that glorious Church of countless members which left the grave of Jesus acquitted, accepted, legally justified, virtually saved. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."

2. Christ rose as a precursor or earnest. Christ is risen the first-fruits of them that sleep. All shall rise. "All that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and shall come forth, they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation." But whilst all the dead are the subjects of the Mediator's authority, and all are destined to hear His voice, there is a special relation betwixt Himself and His believing people which identifies their lot with their risen Redeemer. Because He lives, they shall live also. Nay, believing in Him they never die. From the great life-fountain, the

Mediator's person, their souls have imbibed immortality, and their union with Christ secures them an eventual share in Christ's own Resurrection. All that are in their graves shall hear Christ's voice ; but Christians in the grave are not dead, but only sleeping : and whether in the grave or going to it, they are not only hearers of Christ's voice, but sharers of Christ's vitality.

Of this implication of all His people in Christ's Resurrection, the Apostle Paul gives a twofold illustration. He calls the rising Redeemer "the first-fruits of them that sleep"—and he calls Him "a quickening spirit." The first-fruits were the handful of corn which first ripened in the field, or the first cluster which ripened on the tree, and which was not only often the richest in itself, but peculiarly welcome as announcing that the rest is coming. And so of that corn which has fallen into the ground and died, the handful first ripe has already gone home to God's garner, and tells that the rest will follow ; and though the remainder does not mature with the same miraculous rapidity, not a grain shall be lost. Time's winter and the tears of separation have fallen over it like a dew upon herbs, and still it dwells in dust ; but these heavens shall open, and earth's atmosphere shall thrill with issuing immortality, and conscious of the quickening presence, the dwellers in the dust shall awake and sing,—together

with Christ's dead body shall they come—together with His dead body, and made blissfully like to His glorious body,—and in that instantaneous maturing the first-fruits are repeated over all the golden field, and the harvest of the earth is reaped. Again, as in Adam all the Adamic die, so in Christ all the Christian live. Those who have the blood of Adam in their veins have the mortality of Adam in their systems: those who have the spirit of Jesus in their souls, bear about with them the germ of a better resurrection. Each Adam is a representative; each is a public person; each is a covenant head; each has his own posterity. In Adam all die. His first sin brought death on himself and all his descendants; and though there was nothing else to cause it, such is sin's malignity, that Adam's first transgression would be sufficient to account for all the deaths that have ever been. But “as through the offence of one many died, so much more they who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.” And as that first transgression shall not have outwrought its full effects nor developed all its malignity till the last of our doomed species has gasped in mortal agony, and wrestled out the great death-struggle—till the last grave has been closed, and the last orphan has put the weeds of mourning on—so the riches of Christ's righteousness, and the extent of Christ's resurrection

shall not be demonstrated till every grave is open, and the sea has given up its dead; and pointing to a multitude whom no man can number out of every kindred and nation—sons from the east and the west, from Africa and either Indies, from the snowy Alp and from the burning zone, with every feature merged in resemblance to His own glorious body—the Second Adam exclaims to the Father, “Here am I and the children which Thou hast given me.”

3. Christ rose a specimen of what His risen people shall be.

It would be interesting to know what like man was in the primeval paradise: what like he was when still sinless and unfallen. But for this we have few data; and with this we have not much to do. It is more important for us to know what like man shall be in his glorified body, and in the paradise restored; and for our conjectures here we have surer ground and more abundant materials. As regards the mode of His existence, an attentive reader may perceive a striking difference between Jesus not yet crucified, and the same Jesus risen. For many years He had been found in fashion as a man, and except on a few rare emergencies—as when He walked on the sea, and extricated Himself from the mob at Nazareth—He did nothing to evince Him aught else than “bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh.” He hungered, He thirsted, He ate, He drank, He sought

the refreshment of sleep, and when He exchanged one place for another, He footed all the intermediate space, and was sometimes weary with the journey. But after his resurrection there was a wonderful change. To shew disciples that it was still a true body which He wore, we find Him twice partaking of ordinary food ; but of His place of abode, of His lodging or resting anywhere, we have not the slightest hint ; and all unlike those previous years, when every movement was minutely known, and every day's employments could be exactly recorded, the usual avocations of these forty days were utterly unknown. In what earthly home He sojourned, no disciple guessed, and how He was occupied, none presumed to ask. Except the walk to Emmaus, there were no more journeys with the Master in the midst ; and though He was in Galilee and Jerusalem by turns, no one saw Him traversing the distance between. In the garden He accosts Mary Magdalene, and anon He intercepts her companions still hasting towards the city. At Emmaus, the two disciples recognise Him, but before they can follow up their delightful discovery, He again has vanished from their view ; and that same evening the ten are assembled, and the door is firmly fastened : there is no footfall on the stair : the latch is not lifted : the bolt does not fly back, but Jesus is in the midst, saying, "Peace be unto you." The truth is, our earth was

no longer "His local residence. He had become the inhabitant of another region, from which He occasionally came to visit His disciples, till at last He took a visible departure, in order that they might cease to expect Him till the restitution of all things."* The body which had been sown in dishonour was now raised in glory. It had been sown a natural body, but was now raised a spiritual body. It was amaranthine—immortal—a body which, once dead, could die no more—a materialism which no longer shrouded so closely the indwelling Godhead: a body which had already been within the veil, and which shed around it the calm and sanctity imported from that holy place—a body which made the upper chamber a Tabor, and the forty days a perpetual Transfiguration—a body which stone walls could not exclude, and which the earth's gravitation could not detain—a body which could easily elude their observation; which was at once so identical that it could be infallibly recognised as that same Jesus, and withal so much fairer than the sons of men, that at first some of the five hundred doubted if it were really Himself. Without any studious reserve on His side, no wonder that there was now a felt remoteness on the side of disciples; and with its texture so fine and so emissive of the glory within, when the Wearer of this glorious

* For the full discussion of this interesting subject see Horsley's remarkable "Sermons on Our Lord's Resurrection."

humanity presented Himself on the Hill of Galilee, or beside the Lake of Tiberias, or in the upper room of the city, or finally left them on the skirts of Olivet, no wonder that the impulse was always the same, and that those who in other days were free to talk with the Master, now felt constrained to fall at His feet, and worship their God.

Something like this shall the risen Christian be. He knows not what he shall be, but he knows that when Christ appears, he shall be like Him. He looks for the Saviour, who shall change his vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body. And as he has borne the image of the earthly Adam, he expects to bear the image of the heavenly. Without being able to go into every detail, he has obtained glimpses enough of a risen Redeemer during these forty days, to know that the corporeity he is hereafter to wear will have many forms and many exemptions at present unknown. It will be able to exchange one place for another with vast rapidity and without fatigue. It will be able to frequent scenes and enter places from which it is at present debarred. Like Jesus in the Upper Room, who perhaps had long been present before He was perceived, and who did not necessarily withdraw the instant He ceased to be seen, it may require a miracle to make itself palpable to flesh and blood; but its ordinary avocations and its familiar associates must be such as it hath

not entered into the heart of man to conceive. And like Christ's glorified body, it will hunger no more, neither thirst any more, and in the land where it dwells, the inhabitant "shall no more say, I am sick."

4. Christ rose as a conqueror to commence a new dominion. "He must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is Death." Nor will the end come till He has conquered back the empire of the universe to the Godhead. "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power." That reign is begun. That conquest is now proceeding. The Mediator is on the throne. He has received all power in Heaven and on Earth. His people are as safe as the subjects can be of One whose dominion ruleth over all. Nor will this mighty One put up His sword or stay His career of victory till all the universe is loyal, or all that is disloyal is disarmed; till moral evil has disappeared from the sight of a holy creation, banished to its own place; and having put down all opposing authority and power, Messiah can hand back to the Father His completed commission—as the Son and the Sent of the Father doing homage to absolute Deity, "that God may be all in all." *

* 1 Cor. xv.

A Saviour's resurrection is too seldom the subject of our thoughts. Even those who are "often at Gethsemane" too seldom go out as far as unto Bethany, and gaze up into Heaven along the track of an ascending Redeemer. Even those who sometimes look forth to Christ on the Cross, too seldom look up to Christ on the Throne. But if Jesus was delivered for our offences, He was raised again for our justification : and if we would lead an elastic, hopeful, and improving life, we must remember our Saviour as risen and reigning, and destined to come again.

To one great sorrow, especially, is Christ's resurrection the surest antidote. "O Death, where is thy sting? O Grave, where is thy victory?" Death has a sting. It is a very dreadful evil. It is dismal to endure, and scarcely less dismal to anticipate. To lie down in pain, perhaps in racking agony : to count the slow-creeping minutes, and wish for evening dusk or morning dawn, which does arrive, but brings no balm of sleep, no sense of betterness : to grow confused, but still conscious of misery : to have wishes that cannot be understood, and words that will not utter : to see dear ones fading into the distance, and to be able to exchange no more love's wonted tokens, not even a twinkle of the eye nor a murmur of the voice : to feel the breath stifling and the heart-strings breaking, and to be left alone in the midst of this cold and dreary mystery :—what can

be more awful, unless it be his case who is the helpless looker-on; who watches pangs which he cannot assuage, and imploring looks which he cannot interpret; who plies cordials at which the King of Terrors mocks, and who importunes science for miracles which it cannot work; who in frantic desperation would detain the spirit which has already burst its earthly fetters, and, more frantic still, refuses to believe that the gulf is already crossed, and that the form which he enclasps is no longer a father or a mother, but only senseless clay; who must see these dear familiar features grow so ghastly, and then learn to love them in this new and mournful phasis, only to endure another woe when the coffin-lid is closed, and the funeral pomp sets forth, and from the macerating leaves and plashy turf of the churchyard the survivor comes back to the forsaken dwelling, and upbraids himself that he should sit under the bright lamp, and before the blazing fire, while, beneath the bleak November night, that dear form is left to silence and to solitude. Death has a sting. There is often a pang in its very prospect. You are well and happy; but the thought crosses you, 'I must soon work my last day's work, or play out my last holiday. Soon must I take my last look of summer, and spend my last evening with my friends. Soon must I be done with these pleasant books, and put the marker in where it will never

again be moved. Soon must I vanish from these dear haunts, and this most beautiful world; and soon must I go down to the house of silence, and say to the worm, "Thou art my sister." And yet, soon as that may be, still sooner may precious ones be taken, and force me to say, "I would not live always." Whether in the actual endurance or in the awful anticipation, death is very dreadful, and it used to have a sting which not only slew the victim, but extinguished the survivor's hope. Thanks be to God for Jesus Christ. Thanks that there is one tomb which has already lost its tenant, and thanks for the news of how that happened. Thanks that the old penalty is now exhausted in the sinner's Substitute, and that whatever great stone be placed on our sepulchre, there need be no grave-stone of guilt on the immortal soul. Thanks, O Father, for Thy gift unspeakable; thanks, O Saviour, for Thy love unfathomable. Thanks for tasting death for every man. Thanks for Thy glorious resurrection and beneficent reign. Thanks for Thy gracious promise to destroy the last enemy; and thanks, O Holy Spirit, the Comforter, for those to whom Thou hast given such union to Jesus that they feel as if they could never die—nay, that to depart and be with Christ is far better. "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But

thanks be to God who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ."

To get the full benefit of these assurances, the reader is earnestly exhorted to keep in memory his high calling and the Author of his better life. "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." Prize and use for its proper purposes the Lord's day. As sacred but far more touching than the world's primeval Sabbath, let its chiming minstrelsy ever remind you, "Christ is risen," and seek to catch the suggestions of things not seen as yet which it wafts from the hills of Immortality. And sorrow not as those who have no hope concerning friends who sleep in Jesus. Considering that we "believe in the Resurrection of the dead, and the Life Everlasting," there is reason to apprehend that our whole feeling in this country regarding our departed friends is too funereal; and on behalf of England we have sometimes envied the brighter hope—the look of Easter morning, which seems to linger still in Luther's land. With its emblems suggestive of Resurrection and Heaven, its churchyard is not a Pagan burial-ground, but the place where believers sleep,—a true cemetery, to which friendship can find it pleasant to repair and meditate. At the obsequies of Christian brethren it is not a funeral knell which strikes slowly

and sternly ; but from the village steeple there sheds a soft and almost cheerful requiem : and though there may be many wet eyes in the procession, there are not many of the artificial insignia of woe, as the whole parish convoys the departed to his “bed of peaceful rest.” Once in the Black Forest we accompanied to the “Place of Peace” an old man’s funeral, and there still dwells in our ear the quaint and kindly melody which the parishioners sang along the road ; and we have sometimes wished that we could hear the like in our own land, with its sombre and silent obsequies.

Neighbour, accept our parting song ;
The road is short, the rest is long :
The Lord brought here, the Lord takes hence,—
This is no house of permanence.

On bread of mirth and bread of tears
The pilgrim fed these chequer’d years ;
Now, landlord world, shut to the door,
Thy guest is gone for evermore.

—Gone to a realm of sweet repose,
His comrades bless him as he goes :
Of toil and moil the day was full,
A good sleep now,—the night is cool.

Ye village bells, ring, softly ring,
And in the blessed Sabbath bring,
Which from this weary work-day tryst
Awaits God’s folk through Jesus Christ.

And open wide, thou Gate of Peace,
And let this other journey cease,
Nor grudge a narrow couch, dear neighbours,
For slumbers won by life-long labours.

Beneath these sods how close ye lie !
But many a mansion 's in yon sky :
Ev'n now, beneath the sapphire throne,
Is his prepared through God's dear Son.

"I quickly come," that Saviour cries ;
Yea, quickly come, this churchyard sighs •
Come, Jesus, come, we wait for thee,—
Thine now and ever let us be.

THE END.

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